

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J.K. ROWLING

Rowling was born outside of Bristol England to Peter James Rowling, an aircraft engineer, and Anne Rowling, a science technician. As a child, Rowling often wrote fantasy stories and was very precocious. Rowling attended secondary school at Wyedean School and College, where her mother worked. Rowling then attended the University of Exeter, studying French and Classics. After, Rowling worked as a researcher and bilingual secretary in London for Amnesty International. She later moved to Portugal to teach English at night, and to write during the day. There, she met Portuguese journalist Jorge Arantes. They married two years later, and their daughter, Jessica, was born a year after that. The couple separated a few months after Jessica's birth, and Rowling moved with her infant daughter to Edinburgh, Scotland. Rowling, who had gotten the idea for *Harry Potter* in 1990, wrote the first book while completing a teacher training course. Rowling then finished *Harry Potter* in 1995. Initially, only 1,000 copies were printed. Five months later, the book won its first award, and in early 1998, an auction was held in the United States for the rights to publish the novel, which was won by Scholastic Inc. for \$105,000. *Harry Potter* became a sensation, growing larger with each book and shattering sales records. *Harry Potter* is now a global brand worth an estimated \$15 billion, and the books have been adapted into record-breaking films as well. In 2001, Rowling remarried and had a second child. She has also become a noted philanthropist, donating significant money to combat poverty, social inequality, and MS, or multiple sclerosis, a disease from which her mother passed away. She continues to write, and has written several crime novels under a pen name, Robert Galbraith.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Harry Potter is set in Britain in the 1990s, and some academics have argued that the wizarding society in *Harry Potter* reflects some of the issues pulsing through Britain at the time. For instance, Lana A. Whited writes about the legacy of a racial and class caste system found in both Britain and the wizarding world: that the tensions between "Mudbloods" (a derogatory term for wizards who have non-magical parents), "pure bloods" (wizards whose parents are both from lines of wizards, and are thus "pure"), and "Muggles" (entirely non-magic people), echo the tensions between different races and classes in 1990s Britain. Additionally, Philip Nel suggests that the unflattering characterization of the conventional, materialistic Dursleys represents Rowling's reaction to the family policies in Britain at

the time. The British government treated straight married couples as the preferred norm, while Rowling was a single mother. Thus, Harry's strongest relationships are based on "affection and loyalty"—the chosen family he finds in Ron and Hermione—rather than traditional family.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is the first in a series of seven books centering on protagonist Harry Potter. Rowling also wrote a few companion books to the series, including *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (the latter of which has also been turned into a movie). Rowling draws from a long tradition of British children's fantasies that have moral underpinnings, such as C.S. Lewis's [*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*](#), in which normal children are transported to a magical world through the wardrobe in their caretaker's home. Some of Roald Dahl's novels also bear resemblance to the *Harry Potter* series. For instance, in *James and the Giant Peach*, James tragically loses his parents and has to live with a pair of unpleasant aunts, similar to Harry's plight living with his nasty aunt, uncle, and cousin. In Roald Dahl's *Mathilda*, an otherwise regular child discovers she has telekinetic powers and is constantly picked on by her obnoxious family, echoing Harry's surprising discovery of his own magical powers, as well as his miserable life with the Dursleys. Some readers have also noted parallels between Rowling's characterizations and the works of Charles Dickens, in which the names of characters express their owner's traits.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
- **When Written:** 1990-1995
- **Where Written:** Manchester, England; Porto, Portugal; Edinburgh, Scotland
- **When Published:** 1995
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Children's fantasy, children's fiction
- **Setting:** England; Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
- **Climax:** Harry finds the Sorcerer's Stone and prevents Voldemort's return to power.
- **Antagonist:** Voldemort, Professor Quirrell, and Draco Malfoy
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Beginning with the End. Rowling has stated that within the first year of writing the *Harry Potter* series, she wrote a sketch of what one of the final chapters of the seventh book might be.

Harry Potter and the Dead Languages. As of 2018, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* has been published in 75 other languages, including Latin and Ancient Greek.



PLOT SUMMARY

Ten-year-old Harry Potter has, thus far, led a miserable life. He lives with his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, because his parents died when he was very young. While they spoil their own son, Dudley, they frequently punish Harry, especially when odd things happen around him that he is unable to explain. One day, hordes of letters begin to arrive in the mail for Harry, but Vernon intercepts them.

On Harry's eleventh birthday on July 31, an enormous wizard named Hagrid appears and explains to Harry that he is a wizard, too. Harry's parents, Lily and James, were wizards who sacrificed themselves to save him from a supremely evil wizard named Voldemort. When Voldemort tried to kill baby Harry, however, he was inexplicably unable to—he only left a lightning bolt-shaped scar on Harry's forehead. Thus, Harry is famous all over the wizarding world as “the boy who lived.” Hagrid then delivers one of the letters, which invites Harry to Hogwarts, a school for witchcraft and wizardry.

The next day, Hagrid takes Harry to Gringotts, the wizarding bank, where Harry's parents have left him a small fortune. Hagrid also shiftily retrieves a small package from a different vault, though he won't tell Harry what it is because it is secret business for Hogwarts. Harry then buys his school supplies (robes, cauldrons, spellbooks, and a wand) but starts to worry that he doesn't know anything about magic. Hagrid assures him that he'll learn quickly.

A month later, Harry takes the train to Hogwarts. He quickly befriends a boy named Ron Weasley, who is also a first year, on the train. Harry also meets a boy named Draco Malfoy, whom Harry immediately dislikes for his arrogance and cruelty. They also meet Hermione Granger, a precocious girl whom they peg as a know-it-all. When they arrive at the Hogwarts Castle, the students are immediately sorted into four Houses based on personality by a “sorting hat.” Harry is relieved not to be sorted into Slytherin, which was Voldemort's House and is known to prize ambition (and into which Draco is sorted). Instead, he is sorted into Gryffindor, a House that is known best for bravery, along with Ron and Hermione.

Harry begins his classes, learning subjects like transfiguration, charms, herbology, defense against the dark arts and astronomy. When he has his first Potions lesson, however, the teacher, Professor Snape, takes an instant dislike to him, though

Harry is not sure why.

Harry and the Gryffindors go on their first flying lesson the next week, along with the Slytherins, and though he flies when he is not supposed to, Professor McGonagall (Head of Gryffindor House) sees his innate talent and recruits him for the Gryffindor Quidditch team (a wizarding sport played on brooms).

That night, Malfoy challenges Harry to a wizard's duel at midnight in the trophy room, and Harry and Ron sneak out that evening despite Hermione's protests. They are almost caught, and they duck into a forbidden third-floor corridor in order to avoid being found. They realize, however, why the corridor is off-limits: it has a giant three-headed dog inside, which is guarding a trapdoor.

On Halloween, Ron comments on how annoying Hermione is and how she has no friends, which Hermione overhears. She spends the day crying in the girl's bathroom. That night, the Halloween festivities are interrupted when the defense against the dark arts teacher, Professor Quirrell, announces in a panic that there's a troll in the dungeon. Instead of going back to their dorms, Harry and Ron seek out Hermione to warn her about the troll (also noting on their way that Snape is suspiciously heading in a different direction from the other teachers). Harry and Ron then encounter the troll in the bathroom where Hermione has been taking refuge all day, and Ron is able to knock it out. When the teachers discover what they have done, Hermione lies to keep them out of trouble, and Harry, Ron, and Hermione become friends. Harry later discovers that Snape had in fact tried to get past the three-headed dog during this event, and concludes that he must be trying to steal whatever the dog is guarding.

In November, Harry plays his first Quidditch match. The game starts well for Gryffindor, until Harry's broom starts to try to buck him off. Hermione realizes that Snape, who is sitting in the stands with the other spectators, is jinxing Harry's broom. She sets Snape's cloak on fire, breaking his concentration, and Harry is able to win the match for Gryffindor.

Hagrid accidentally admits to the three friends that the dog is guarding something that has to do with a man named Nicolas Flamel. The kids pick up on this clue, and try to look up Flamel in the library. However, they don't know where to look, and as the holidays approach, they are still unsuccessful in finding out who he might be.

Hermione goes home for the holidays, but Harry and Ron remain (Ron's parents are visiting his brother Charlie in Romania). Harry and Ron spend their days playing wizard's chess (the same as Muggle chess, except the pieces are alive). On Christmas, Harry receives presents for the first time, including a handmade flute from Hagrid. One present is an [Invisibility Cloak](#), a rare and valuable object that makes the wearer invisible. Harry doesn't know who it's from: the note

that came with it merely says the cloak had belonged to James, and that the person who ended up with the cloak after James' death wanted to return it to Harry. That night, Harry sneaks into the Restricted Section of the library to see if he can find a book with information on Flamel. But as soon as he picks up a book, it starts screaming, and so he runs down the corridor and into an unused classroom, hoping to avoid the school's nasty caretaker, Filch.

While hiding in the classroom, Harry notices a large mirror—the [Mirror of Erised](#). When Harry looks into it, it shows Lily and James behind him. He grows consumed by what he sees, returning to the Mirror the next night with Ron, and a third night alone despite Ron's warnings that Harry is obsessing over it. On the third night, the Hogwarts headmaster, Dumbledore, confronts Harry about the mirror, and explains that it shows the deepest desires of a person's heart. He tells Harry that the mirror will be moved the next day, and warns him not to go looking for it, as people have wasted their lives sitting in front of it, driven insane by what they see in the reflection.

With a fortuitous clue from a collectible wizard card, Harry, Ron, and Hermione discover that Flamel is the only known maker of [the Sorcerer's Stone](#), which can turn metal into gold and produces the Elixir of Life, which makes the drinker immortal. Meanwhile, Harry grows increasingly suspicious of Snape, who he believes wants to steal the Stone, and also tries to get more info from Hagrid about Fluffy. When Harry visits Hagrid, Hagrid is illegally hatching a dragon that he won from a stranger in a card game. Harry worries that Hagrid will get in trouble for keeping this dragon, and so he and Hermione use the Invisibility Cloak to sneak out of bed and drop Norbert off with friends of Ron's brother Charlie, who works with dragons. After successfully bringing Norbert to safety, Harry and Hermione are caught trying to return to Gryffindor. They lose 150 points for Gryffindor for being out of bed after hours, and receive detention.

Their detention is served in the Forbidden Forest, where they are looking for something that has killed a unicorn. In the Forest, Harry sees a cloaked figure drinking the blood of a unicorn. The figure menacingly starts to come after Harry, but a centaur named Firenze steps in, saving Harry from the figure. Once Harry is safe, Firenze explains that the figure was Voldemort, and that he was drinking the blood of the unicorn because unicorn blood will keep a person on the brink of death alive.

With this knowledge, Harry then starts to worry that Snape is going to steal the Stone for Voldemort in order to give him immortality. A thought strikes him: it's odd that someone happened along with an illegal dragon egg, which Hagrid desperately wanted. Harry questions Hagrid, who reveals that he informed the hooded stranger with the dragon that the key to taking care of any creature is knowing how to calm it down.

With Fluffy, for example, all one has to do is play music, which puts him to sleep.

Hearing this, Harry is convinced that the stranger was either Snape or Voldemort. And after Dumbledore is called away on urgent business, Harry is certain that Snape will try to steal the Stone that night and aims to get it first. Ron and Hermione prepare to go with him, while a nervous boy named Neville tries unsuccessfully to prevent them from leaving the dormitory and getting in more trouble. Harry, Ron, and Hermione then work together to overcome the spells and enchantments guarding the Stone.

Harry ultimately makes it to the final room alone. There, Harry discovers Quirrell is actually the one who had been doing Voldemort's bidding, not Snape. Voldemort has been hiding underneath Quirrell's turban, only a face on the back of the man's head. Harry is able to acquire the Stone by looking into the Mirror of Erised. His reflection places the Stone in Harry's pocket. Quirrell tries to take the stone, but is inexplicably burned when he touches Harry. Harry tries to hold on to Quirrell in order to prevent him from getting the Stone, but the pain mounts in his scar, and he faints.

Harry wakes in the hospital, where Dumbledore explains why Quirrell was unable to touch him: the love that Lily showed in sacrificing herself for Harry gave him a magical protection from Quirrell and Voldemort. Dumbledore also reveals that he intends to destroy the Stone to prevent anyone from using it for evil.

At the end of the year feast, Dumbledore awards Ron, Hermione, Harry, and Neville 160 points collectively for their bravery, earning Gryffindor the House Cup. At the end of the year, Harry returns to the Dursley's home, but is happy knowing that he now has friends and people who love him—and that the Dursleys don't know he's not allowed to do magic at home.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Harry Potter – Protagonist Harry Potter has green eyes, disheveled black hair, and a distinctive lightning bolt-shaped scar on his forehead. Harry is orphaned as a baby when the dark wizard Voldemort kills his parents, Lily and James. Curiously, Lord Voldemort is unable to kill baby Harry, making him famous throughout the wizarding world as “the boy who lived.” In light of this fame, which would certainly inflate Harry's ego, Dumbledore decides to send the boy to live with his Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, who are both Muggles. Harry thus grows up ignorant of his magical capabilities, the history of how his parents died, and his own fame. On Harry's eleventh birthday, Hagrid informs him of his extraordinary background, and invites Harry to Hogwarts, the wizarding school. Initially

Harry worries that he is already thought of as a great wizard due to what happened to him as a child—yet he doesn't know the faintest thing about magic. Luckily, he discovers a talent for flying and joins the Quidditch team early on, giving him a community and a sense that he does possess some innate magical abilities. Harry truly values his friendships and is very loyal to Ron and Hermione, often actively trying to protect them and other classmates like Neville Longbottom. Harry has a deep yearning for his late parents, which is revealed when he encounters [the Mirror of Erised](#), but teachers like Hagrid and the Headmaster, Dumbledore, come to serve as parental figures who provide Harry with love and guidance. Harry also has a blatant disregard for the rules when he feels that breaking them will allow him to do what he feels is right, an impulse that is aided by the [Invisibility Cloak](#)—and, by extension, Dumbledore himself, who gifts Harry the cloak. Perhaps Harry's most critical characteristic is his humility, which leads him to put others' well-being before his own and ultimately what allows him to obtain [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) and prevent it from falling into evil hands.

Ron Weasley – One of the protagonists in the novel, Ron Weasley is one of Harry's best friends, along with Hermione Granger. Ron is the youngest son in the Weasley family, and he has five older brothers. Ron feels that he is constantly outshone by their accomplishments, and his deepest desire is to achieve more than any of them. Ron and Harry meet on the train to Hogwarts and become fast friends. Ron serves as a gateway to help Harry learn about some of the customs of the wizarding world, and alleviates Harry's fears that he won't know how to do any magic because he didn't grow up around it—everyone has a lot to learn, regardless of their background. Harry, in turn, makes Ron feel better about his family's poverty when Draco Malfoy makes fun of Ron, and Harry remains loyal to Ron when Malfoy offers to help Harry become friends with the “right sort” of people. Ron accompanies Harry on nearly all of his adventures, and also picks up on Harry's self-sacrificing tendencies: when Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to prevent someone (whom they wrongly assume is Snape) from stealing [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) on Voldemort's behalf, Ron sacrifices himself in a violent game of life-sized chess with living pieces so that Harry and Hermione can continue on and make sure that Voldemort does not get the Sorcerer's Stone. Ultimately, Ron and Hermione's friendship with Harry becomes the glue that holds the story together and propels it forward, as only with their help is Harry able to achieve his goals, protect the Stone, and become the hero of the story.

Hermione Granger – One of the novel's protagonists, Hermione is of Harry's best friends, along with Ron Weasley. Hermione is a first year student in Gryffindor with bushy brown hair, large teeth, and a bossy voice. Hermione is extremely clever but is also a bit of a know-it-all. Hermione's desire to stand out and earn good grades perhaps stems from

the fact that she is from a Muggle family and, like Harry, worries that she may not fit in with the other students or may feel that she is behind. Harry and Ron initially dislike Hermione because she is so adamant about following the rules (she even contemplates telling on them in order to preemptively prevent them from sneaking out at night). But after an incident in which Harry and Ron save her from a troll that is loose at Hogwarts, Hermione begins to see the value in sometimes breaking the rules, and the three become close friends. Hermione's intelligence is instrumental in helping Harry: it allows her to literally save him when his broom is jinxed during a Quidditch match, and also helps her figure out who Nicolas Flamel is when they are trying to figure out what the three-headed dog is guarding. Additionally, like Ron, Harry's desire to put others above himself rubs off on Hermione as well when she sets out to protect [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) with the two boys. Only together are they able to achieve this goal; the three friends must work their way through a series of rooms containing different challenges that are meant to guard the stone. While Ron is instrumental in the wizard's chess challenge, allowing Harry and Hermione to press on, Hermione remembers a key bit of information from Herbology and also solves a tricky logic puzzle that allows Harry to continue forward and try to prevent the Stone from falling into the hands of evil.

Albus Dumbledore – The Headmaster at Hogwarts. Dumbledore is an old wizard with a long white beard and half-moon-shaped glasses. He is revered in the wizarding world as one of the greatest wizards in the modern era. Throughout the book, Dumbledore serves as a parental figure and a guide for Harry, making the crucial early decision to send him to live with Vernon and Petunia so that he wouldn't grow up surrounded by fame, which would most certainly inflate his ego. When Harry arrives at school, Dumbledore helps him learn crucial lessons about [the Mirror of Erised](#) and gives him some implicit encouragement to break the rules in passing down James's [Invisibility Cloak](#) to him. As Harry surmises by the end of the book, Dumbledore gives Harry enough information to help him figure out how to get to [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) and to face Voldemort, rather than simply stopping him. In this way, Dumbledore encourages Harry to do what is right and to put others above himself, even if it means breaking the rules. At the end of the book, Dumbledore helps Harry to understand more fully why he was able to survive Voldemort's curse ten years earlier, and why he was able to get to the Sorcerer's Stone. Dumbledore's answers give Harry some sense of clarity, but also imply that there is a lot Harry has yet to understand about his and Voldemort's intertwined fates, which are gradually unthreaded in the subsequent books.

Voldemort / You-Know-Who – Voldemort is an evil wizard and the supreme antagonist of the series. Before Harry is born, Voldemort gains power and followers in the wizarding world, making people suspicious of each other and killing everyone

who dares to defy him. Voldemort is also referred to as “You-Know-Who” and sometimes “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named” because people fear his power so much that they do not want to say his name. When Harry is just a year old, Voldemort goes to the Potter home (for reasons that are not fully explained in this book) in order to kill Harry. He kills James and Lily, who try to defend their son, but when he attempts to kill Harry, Voldemort loses his powers and disappears, leaving only a lightning bolt-shaped scar on Harry’s forehead. Ten years later, Voldemort starts to gain power once more, and gains a faithful follower in Professor Quirrell, a Hogwarts teacher. Eventually Voldemort takes over Quirrell’s body, feeding off of him like a parasite and forcing him to do his bidding. For instance, Voldemort forces Quirrell to slaughter unicorns and drink their blood in order to keep Voldemort alive, and Quirrell goes after [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#) in order to give Voldemort eternal life. Fortunately, Harry prevents this from happening: Quirrell dies at the end of the novel, but Voldemort simply disappears once again, thwarted only for the time being. Voldemort is greedy for both power and life, and in making these the defining characteristics of one of the darkest wizards in history, Rowling demonstrates the dangers of greed and power.

Professor Quirrell – Professor Quirrell is an antagonist in the novel and the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. Quirrell is a young, stuttering professor whom Harry first meets in Diagon Alley. When Harry sees Quirrell at Hogwarts, the professor is sporting a new purple turban (under which readers ultimately learn is Voldemort’s face). Quirrell puts up a front as a nervous, rather ineffective teacher, but behind the scenes he is coldly calculating how to do Voldemort’s bidding. He is so effective at this ruse that Harry spends most of the novel believing that Professor Snape, who has a more threatening presence, is responsible for most of the things that Quirrell has done. By the end of the novel, it becomes clear that it was Quirrell who tried to rob Gringotts bank to get [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#); Quirrell set a troll loose in the dungeon on Halloween; Quirrell jinxed Harry’s broom to try to kill him; and Quirrell was the one who tricked Hagrid into telling him how to get past the three-headed dog guarding the Stone. At the end of the novel Quirrell reveals his motivation, declaring that he has chosen to follow Voldemort because Voldemort showed him that there is no such thing as good and evil, only power. Thus, Quirrell becomes associated with greed and ambition, to the point that he is unable to touch Harry without being burned because Harry is marked by Lily’s love, humility, and sacrifice. This dichotomy puts Quirrell resoundingly on the side of evil, and his defeat is a great victory for Harry.

Rubeus Hagrid – The groundskeeper at Hogwarts, Hagrid is an enormous wizard with thick black hair and a beard. He often uses an umbrella to do magic, despite the fact that he is not supposed to because he was expelled from Hogwarts. Like

Dumbledore, Hagrid serves as a kind of father figure for Harry, particularly in providing him with love, warmth, and kindness early on in the story. Hagrid delivers baby Harry to the Dursleys after Lily and James are killed, and he becomes Harry’s conduit back into the wizarding world on Harry’s eleventh birthday. Hagrid tells Harry about his backstory regarding his parents and Voldemort. He also takes Harry on a shopping trip for school supplies at Diagon alley, introducing him to the wizarding world itself and some of the common customs. When Harry also grows nervous that he will not fit in or that he will not know anything, Hagrid comforts him and tells him that he’ll learn quickly and have a great time at Hogwarts, which he does. Hagrid continues this role when Harry arrives at school, inviting Harry to tea when he needs a pick-me-up and looking out for him when necessary.

Professor Snape – Professor Snape is the Potions teacher at Hogwarts and Head of Slytherin House. Snape has a hooked nose, greasy black hair, and sallow skin. He takes an instant dislike to Harry, which Quirrell later reveals is due to the fact that Snape and Harry’s father, James, hated each other when they attended Hogwarts together. Harry spends most of the book convinced that Snape is trying to steal [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#) for Voldemort. Snape is seen sneaking up to the third floor corridor where a giant three-headed dog is guarding it; Hermione and Ron are convinced that Snape tries to jinx Harry’s broom in order to kill him; and Harry sees him making what Harry believes are threats to Quirrell in order to get Quirrell to tell him how to get past some of the enchantments guarding the Stone. At the end of the book, however, it is revealed that Quirrell was actually the one trying to steal the Stone and was responsible for trying to kill Harry, while Snape was in fact trying to save him (despite his genuine dislike of Harry).

Draco Malfoy – One of the antagonists in the novel, Draco Malfoy is classmate of Harry’s who quickly becomes his rival. Draco is in Slytherin House and can usually be seen flanked by his two friends Crabbe and Goyle. In many ways, Draco’s personality and beliefs are the antithesis of Harry’s; while Harry simply wants to belong, Draco seems intent on cruelly making other people feel like they don’t belong. Draco believes that people who were born into Muggle families (like Hermione) and raised by Muggles (like Harry) shouldn’t be allowed to attend Hogwarts, and makes fun of those whose families do not have the same wealth and status as his own family (like Ron). While Harry is humble, Draco is egotistical. While Harry only breaks the rules to do what is right and stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves (like Neville), Draco is a bully who breaks the rules simply to break them.

Professor McGonagall – The Transfiguration teacher at Hogwarts and the Head of Gryffindor House. Professor McGonagall is a tall woman with black hair, whom Harry

describes as “strict and clever.” She can also transform herself into a cat. She often makes a show of being a stern rule-enforcer, however, she is not against the occasional bending of the rules—like when she discovers Harry’s talent for flying and thus recruits him to the Gryffindor Quidditch team, despite the fact that he was flying when he should not have been and first years are not usually allowed their own brooms.

Neville Longbottom – A classmate of Harry’s and another first year student in Gryffindor. Neville is often portrayed as nervous, inept, or cowardly. Over the course of the book, he loses his beloved pet toad, he falls off his broom immediately during flying lessons and breaks his wrist, he makes an error during potions class and ends up with inflamed boils all over his skin, and he is picked on endlessly by Draco Malfoy. But over the course of the story, Neville relies on Harry, Ron, and Hermione’s friendship in order to give him the confidence to stand up to Malfoy and to feel like he belongs in Gryffindor.

Lily Potter – Harry’s mother and James’s wife. Harry is often described as having his mother’s eyes, which are bright green. Voldemort murdered Lily when Harry was just a baby. In sacrificing her own life in order to save Harry’s, Lily’s love imbued Harry with a special form of magical protection. This, Dumbledore explains at the end of the story, is why Voldemort couldn’t kill Harry, as well as why Quirrell couldn’t touch him without being terribly burned. When Harry looks in the [Mirror of Erised](#), his deepest desire is to see his parents again, proving how vital their love is to him.

James Potter – Harry’s father and Lily’s husband. Like Harry, James had black hair and a troublemaking streak when he was in school, aided by the fact that he was in possession of the [Invisibility Cloak](#). James and Lily were both killed when Harry was just a baby, defending Harry from Voldemort. His and Lily’s love is vital to Harry, and Harry’s deepest desire is to see them again, which is why he sees their reflection in the [Mirror of Erised](#). It is also revealed later in the story that James and Snape maintained a fierce rivalry when they were at school together, which is why Snape hates Harry so passionately.

Vernon Dursley – Harry’s uncle, Petunia’s husband, and Dudley’s father. Vernon and Petunia, both Muggles, pride themselves on leading very “normal” lives. Vernon and Petunia treat Harry horribly, while they spoil Dudley completely. Vernon and Petunia are adamant that they don’t want a wizard in the house, and so they withhold information about Harry’s background from him and punish him severely when Harry (unknowingly) makes odd things happen.

Dudley Dursley – Harry’s cousin and Vernon and Petunia’s son. Dudley is slightly older than Harry and is spoiled rotten by his parents. He gets anything he wants (whether that be food, presents, or a second bedroom while Harry lives in a cupboard). Like his parents, he believes that Harry is very odd, and thus often makes fun of him and picks on him at school, exacerbating Harry’s feeling that he doesn’t belong. Dudley also underscores

how greediness is associated with “bad” characters; while Dudley isn’t necessarily evil, his greediness corrodes his character.

Petunia Dursley – Harry’s aunt, Vernon’s husband, and Dudley’s mother. Petunia is also Lily’s sister, and she has a deep resentment towards Lily, which carries over into her treatment of Harry. Thinking that wizards (like her sister) are “freaks,” Petunia is cruel to Harry and essentially makes him a servant in the home, while totally spoiling her own son, Dudley.

Fred Weasley – One of Ron’s older brothers. Fred is the twin of George Weasley, and they are two years older than Harry and Ron. Their mother, Molly, has a hard time telling them apart, and they have a reputation for being tricksters and troublemakers. Fred and George are also on the Quidditch team with Harry. Their older brothers are Percy, Charlie, and Bill.

George Weasley – One of Ron’s older brothers, and Fred Weasley’s twin. Fred and George are two years older than Harry and Ron and are on the Quidditch team with Harry. The twins’ mother, Molly, has a hard time telling them apart, and they have a reputation for being tricksters and troublemakers. Their older brothers are Percy, Charlie, and Bill.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Nicolas Flamel – The creator of [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#). Flamel has worked with Dumbledore on alchemy and entrusts him to protect the Stone when he discovers that Voldemort is after it. At the time of the novel, Flamel is 665 years old.

Molly Weasley – The mother of Bill, Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, and Ron. Molly kindly helps Harry find platform nine and three-quarters in order to get to the train to Hogwarts.

Oliver Wood – A fifth year student who is the captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Wood teaches Harry how to play Quidditch.

Madam Hooch – The flying teacher at Hogwarts. Madam Hooch also referees some of Harry’s Quidditch matches.

Firenze – A centaur (half-man, half-horse) who lives in the Forbidden Forest. Firenze bravely saves Harry from a menacing hooded figure drinking the unicorn blood (later revealed to be Quirrell and Voldemort).

Charlie Weasley – The second eldest Weasley brother. His brothers are Bill, Percy, Fred, George, and Ron. Charlie works in Romania with dragons, and helps Ron, Harry, and Hermione with Hagrid’s illegal dragon by getting his friends to transport the dragon to Romania.

Argus Filch – The caretaker at Hogwarts, who takes a lot of pleasure in catching students making any trouble. He also has a cat, Mrs. Norris, who helps patrol the halls.

Nearly-Headless-Nick – One of the ghosts at Hogwarts, who

earns this nickname because someone tried to behead him and didn't cut his head off all the way.

Peeves – A poltergeist who likes to make trouble in the hallways, often throwing objects at the students or pointing them in the wrong direction to classrooms.

Percy Weasley – Ron's third eldest brother, who is in his fifth year at Hogwarts. Percy's brothers are Bill, Charlie, Fred, George, and Ron. Percy is a prefect for Gryffindor.

Crabbe – A Slytherin who is one of Draco Malfoy's best friends and henchmen, along with Goyle.

Goyle – A Slytherin who is one of Draco Malfoy's best friends and henchmen, along with Crabbe.

Seamus Finnigan – A classmate of Harry's, who is also a first year in Gryffindor.

Ollivander – A wandmaker in Diagon Alley who sells Harry his wand.

Bill Weasley – Ron's eldest brother who works in Africa for Gringotts. Bill's brothers are Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, and Ron.

Bane A centaur who lives in the forbidden forest. He is more hostile to the idea of allying with humans than Firenze is.

Ronan A centaur who lives in the forbidden forest. He is more hostile to the idea of allying with humans than Firenze is.

Professor Flitwick The charms professor at Hogwarts, and the head of house of Ravenclaw.

from the isolation and dejection of feeling different to the beauty and excitement of finding a place where he belongs.

Harry's early life in the Muggle world is marked by isolation and rejection; his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon make him feel that he is profoundly different from other people and punish him for that difference. Harry's parents, Lily and James (who are a witch and wizard), die when he is just a year old when they are killed by a dark wizard named Voldemort, and subsequently Harry is raised by his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon (who are Muggles). They treat his magic as dangerous and refuse even to tell Harry that he has these magical abilities. When they literally try to fit him into their "normal" life, Harry's magic comes out in full force and he is often punished as a result. One day, Aunt Petunia tries to cut Harry's hair to her own liking, making him almost bald except for his bangs. When his hair grows back immediately the next day, she punishes him by making him remain in his cupboard for a week. In other words, Aunt Petunia isolates Harry for what makes him different—his magical abilities, which are still unknown to him—making him feel worthless and like he doesn't belong. When Harry is included—a rare occurrence—on a trip to the zoo for his cousin Dudley's birthday, he finds that he is able to communicate with a snake in a glass display. He then unintentionally makes the glass disappear, allowing the snake to escape. Harry is severely disciplined and again made to stay in the cupboard for a week without any meals. Later, Vernon insists to Aunt Petunia that when they took him in as a baby, they swore they would "stamp out that dangerous nonsense." In referring to magic as "dangerous nonsense" that needs to be "stamp[ed] out," Vernon firmly positions Harry's difference—his magical ability—as something inherently evil that needs to be quashed. Vernon and Petunia's displeasure is then passed on to Dudley as well, who makes sure Harry is miserable at school by preventing him from making friends, often chasing him or picking on him. These treatments sum up an idea that Harry has felt through his whole life: the odd occurrences that seem to mark a difference in him signify that he doesn't fit in.

When a wizard named Hagrid visits Harry and informs him that he is a wizard, Harry's understanding of himself and the world around him drastically changes. Magic represents a new world to which Harry finds that he truly belongs, and one that he starts to grow into over the course of the book. J.K. Rowling's wizarding world is not an entirely separate, mythical place, but one that is woven into the fabric of the non-magical world. Hagrid takes Harry on a shopping trip in London, and when Hagrid taps on a brick in a nondescript back alley, the wall pulls away to reveal the magical Diagon Alley, a wizarding shopping area where Hagrid gives Harry a basic knowledge about what his magical abilities mean. As Harry is initiated into this new world, it transforms Harry's difference from "dangerous nonsense," as Uncle Vernon put it, to something that makes him special. At Hogwarts, the wizarding school where children learn



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



MAGIC, DIFFERENCE, AND BELONGING

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is the first novel in a seven-part series centering on protagonist Harry Potter, who discovers that he is a wizard

when he is eleven years old. The series tracks an epic battle between good and evil in the wizarding world, but the first book is, in its essence, a coming-of-age story. Harry spends his early life feeling different from the non-magical people ("Muggles") around him, though he doesn't know why. It is only when he discovers he is a wizard and is introduced to the other wizards and the magical world around him, that he is able to grow and feel confident. The magic, then, is not just an exciting part of Rowling's fantastical world, but also a metaphor for Harry's coming into his own. Harry's transition from the non-magical "Muggle" world to the magical world parallels his transition

to harness their magic, the differences from regular school are many. Rather than math, science, and languages, Harry learns Charms, Herbology, Potions, and Transfiguration. The building itself is very different, as the staircases move on their own, ghosts flit about the hallways, and owls deliver the morning mail. “Harry had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place,” which implies that the things that make Hogwarts (and perhaps Harry himself) seem different or “strange” are also the things that make it “splendid.” Additionally, the magical Sorting Hat at Hogwarts places children into four different “Houses” based on their personalities and defining attributes. When Harry is placed into Gryffindor House, it literally gives him a sense of belonging, of joining a group of children that become his closest friends. On a broader scale, Hogwarts itself is a place for those who are different and don’t quite fit into the Muggle world. In other words, Harry essentially finds belonging by embracing rather than shying away from the magic that makes him different.

The Sorcerer’s Stone bears many touchstones of a classic coming-of-age story: Harry Potter is a neglected child who feels different and isolated from those around him. When he enters a new school and makes new friends, however, he sees how his differences give him the opportunity to feel as though he belongs. What sets Harry Potter apart is Rowling’s sly implication that being able to find that world—where one’s differences are celebrated—can literally be a magical thing.



LOVE, FAMILY, AND FRIENDSHIP

At the center of *The Sorcerer’s Stone* is the importance of love from both family and friends.

Though Harry’s parents, Lily and James, love him a great deal, they die when he is very young, and he is placed in the care of his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, Muggle relatives who treat him terribly. When he goes to school at Hogwarts, Harry gains a group of friends—primarily Ron and Hermione—who demonstrate that the love at the heart of friendship can be just as important as that at the heart of familial ties. Ultimately, as Harry learns about his magical abilities and tries to thwart the forces of evil in the wizarding world, Rowling argues that love, family, and friendship serve as forms of protection that help Harry to overcome whatever challenges come his way.

Through Lily and James’s sacrifices for their son, they demonstrate that family can be a life-saving source of love. Harry’s story starts in the aftermath of his parent’s death. When he is only a year old, an evil wizard named Voldemort goes to the Potter home in order to kill Lily and James. Both are killed trying to protect their son, but Lily’s sacrifice in particular prevents Voldemort from being able to kill Harry, as it is implied that this love gives him a kind of magical protection. Additionally, when he tries to kill Harry, Voldemort becomes incredibly weak and disappears. The sacrifice that Lily makes

continues to protect him even later in his life. Harry comes face-to-face with Voldemort again at the end of the novel; he has returned, even though he is weak, by taking over the body of a Hogwarts professor named Quirrell. Professor Quirrell is unable to touch Harry without being burned, which ultimately prevents him from being able to kill Harry. Dumbledore, the headmaster at Hogwarts, later reveals to Harry that Lily’s love is indeed what protected Harry and kept Quirrell from being able to touch him. Dumbledore explains that “to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.” Thus, love becomes essentially the ultimate force for good and a weapon against evil.

While love is always a force for good in the novel, family is not always a conduit for love. Rowling provides a counterexample to James and Lily in the Dursleys, Harry’s unpleasant aunt and uncle, who demonstrate how family ties without love essentially constitute meaningless bonds. Harry’s Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon have absolutely no love for him and are hesitant to take him in as a baby in the first place. Over the first eleven years of his life, they make his living conditions horrendous by forcing him to live in a cupboard, giving him no possessions of his own, and essentially treating him as a servant in their home. Thus, even though family can be a source of love, when a child is not treated with love, it can make a child feel far from protected. Harry feels vulnerable and isolated in the only home he has ever known; as a result, he must find the familial love he is not getting from the Dursleys from other places.

Ultimately, friendships come to take the place of Harry’s family in terms of providing love, support, and protection. The friends that Harry makes at Hogwarts function as a kind of chosen family, as they allow him to feel loved, and, perhaps more importantly, help him to overcome challenges in his life. Even before Harry has officially started school, he meets a classmate named Ron on the train to Hogwarts. Harry confesses his fears that he won’t be good at school because he doesn’t know any magic. Ron immediately quells those fears, telling him that there “loads of people who come from Muggle [non-magic] families and they learn quick enough.” Harry in turn shares his candy with Ron on the train, demonstrating the mutually beneficial power of friendship. Ron and Harry, in turn, help another friend overcome a great challenge; when a troll is running loose at Hogwarts, they help to save another girl in their class, Hermione, from being killed by it. Buoyed by their ability to overcome this obstacle together, the three immediately form a tight-knit bond as a result—one that drives not only the rest of the plot of this book, but the rest of their seven years at Hogwarts. At the end of the novel, Harry is trying to prevent one of the professors, Snape, from obtaining [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#), which is a powerful object that can grant its bearer eternal life. The Stone is guarded by several rooms,

each bearing a different obstacle. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione decide that the best way to protect the stone is by stealing it first, they work as a team to get past these challenges. Hermione is able to remember a key detail from Herbology to get past a set of vines that threatens to strangle them; she also gets past a tricky logic puzzle. Ron takes the lead on a chess game with living pieces, even sacrificing himself in order to let Harry and Hermione advance without him. Harry uses his flying skills to retrieve a key with wings, allowing them to pass through yet another door. Only together are they able to advance, and thus their love and friendship is ultimately what allows Harry to face Voldemort and conquer him once more.

The power of love is a thread that runs through all seven of the *Harry Potter* books, but Rowling's argument concerning love is clear even from the very first pages of the very first novel in the series. Love allows Harry to live, and then ensures that he has the support he needs to fight off the forces of evil. Ultimately love becomes the definitive difference between Harry and Voldemort, and is the reason why good will always conquer evil.



POWER, GREED, AND DESIRE

For Harry and his friends starting school at Hogwarts, magic comes with a certain degree of power: the ability to make a feather levitate, to turn a match into a needle, to fly on a broomstick. But Rowling also hints at what happens when adult wizards grow greedy for power and the dangerous ramifications of that desire. Thus, not only does Rowling associate greed and the desire for power with evil, but she also argues that even more innocent desires can be harmful, because they can lead to a destructive kind of greediness.

Voldemort is the prime example of how power and greed are dangerous, as the desire for power leads him to becoming the most evil wizard in history. In one of the book's early chapters, Hagrid explains Voldemort's backstory to Harry: decades earlier, Voldemort had wanted power and thus turned "as bad as you could go." Those who stood up to him were killed—including Harry's parents, Lily and James. Thus, the desire for power is immediately associated with evil. Voldemort is so powerful that wizards don't even want to say his name, instead calling him "You-Know-Who" or "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," demonstrating how power can breed fear. This fear, in turn, allows Voldemort to gain more power, as he enlists followers simply because people are afraid of him, or are enticed by the power that he has and want some of their own. Voldemort, having been inexplicably unable to kill Harry as a baby, disappears for eleven years, but he returns when Harry begins school at Hogwarts. He takes over the body of a professor, Quirrell, and tries to steal [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) in order to revive himself and eventually return to power. Quirrell himself also reinforces this association of power with evil. He

tells Harry, "There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it." Yet, because this statement is being spoken by a character who has been overtaken by an evil wizard, Rowling implies that this kind of philosophy only serves those who are evil.

While Voldemort is easily associated with greed and the desire for power, other characters also toy with the same feelings. Rowling shows how seemingly benign desires can bleed into greed, ultimately arguing that deep desires can be dangerous and ultimately lead to bad choices. Harry himself is tempted by intense desires; one day while roaming in the castle at Hogwarts, he finds [the Mirror of Erised](#) ("desire" spelled backwards). The Mirror's reflection shows Harry with his parents next to him, and he is filled with an intense longing for them. He returns to the Mirror again and again, trying to see more of his late parents, until Dumbledore discovers him in front of the Mirror. Dumbledore tells Harry that the Mirror shows one's innermost desires—which is why Harry sees his parents, since he's never truly known them—but he also cautions Harry that many wizards have wasted their lives or have gone insane because of what they see in the Mirror of Erised. Through Dumbledore's advice, Rowling demonstrates that desire and greed—even if the greed stems from a perfectly innocent and understandable place—can be dangerous, and must be approached with caution. Harry's cousin Dudley is another embodiment of greed. Dudley receives more presents from his parents each year, eats as much as he wants, and gets anything he asks for. Vernon and Petunia spoil Dudley with both material goods and attention as a way of loving him. They don't intend to turn him into a repulsive person, but nonetheless their actions instill that greed in him. Even though he is not nearly as bad as Voldemort, Rowling thus reinforces the association she has created between greed and bad character.

If love is the driving good force in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, then power, greed, and desire serve as the primary forces of evil. Though characters are not always so black and white—even predominantly "good" characters can be tempted by these ideas—they are ultimately defined by their abilities to overcome dangerous desires and greediness.



HUMILITY AND SELF-SACRIFICE

In contrast to the ideas of power, greed, and desire held up as forces for evil, humility and self-sacrifice become the cornerstones of good character in *The Sorcerer's Stone*. While antagonistic characters like Voldemort, Quirrell, and Dudley tend to focus on their own desires and needs, characters like Harry, Ron, and Hermione often think about others before themselves. In associating her protagonists—and Harry in particular—with these virtues, Rowling emphasizes the idea that humility and self-sacrifice are key indicators of goodness and are virtues worth striving for.

Throughout the novel, Harry is the primary example of how characters are shown to be good by exhibiting selflessness and humility. After Harry's parents are tragically killed and Dumbledore is figuring out the best course of action to take regarding the newly orphaned one-year-old Harry, he comes to the conclusion that it is best to leave him with the Dursleys in the Muggle world. Otherwise, he reasons, Harry's ego will swell considerably, as he is soon to become famous in the wizarding world as "the boy who lived," and the boy who was able to defeat Voldemort. In fact, Snape's instant dislike of Harry stems from the idea that he thinks Harry is arrogant due to his fame. This could not be further from the truth, however: Harry spends the first eleven years of his life essentially as a servant to his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, with no knowledge of the wizarding world, and thus he has no conception of the fame surrounding him (and little conception of his own self-worth, as Petunia and Vernon constantly belittle him).

When Harry discovers that he is one of the most famous people in the wizarding world, he still remains humble. Instead of letting the fame go to his head, he actually becomes worried because he doesn't think that he can live up to people's expectations. Thus, Harry sets out to try and prove himself through hard work rather than relying on his reputation. He works hard in school and earns good grades, even though he does sometimes get into trouble. He also becomes the youngest Quidditch player for a Hogwarts team in a century after Professor McGonagall sees his knack for flying. But again, rather than let this get to his head, he works harder and harder at practice. When he wins a match for his team in under five minutes, which is an astonishing feat, he is hardly phased by the adoration his classmates heap upon him—he is simply happy that he is no longer just a famous name, and that he has an accomplishment to be proud of. This humility fuels Harry's self-sacrificing tendencies, putting his own desires and sometimes his well-being aside in order to please others or to do good deeds. When Harry thinks that Professor Snape is out to steal [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) (a powerful object that gives its owner eternal life), Harry is adamant that he should find the Stone before Snape does—not because he wants its power, but simply because he wants to protect the Stone from those with evil or selfish intentions. He risks his life completing the obstacles that are guarding the Stone, all in service of the good of the school—and the wider magical world. These actions make him the hero of the book, and associate his core qualities of humility and selflessness with his goodness.

Hermione and Ron, the two other protagonists, also follow Harry's lead, learning to putting others' needs above their own. This reinforces the importance of striving toward humility and selflessness as a means to be a genuinely good person. When Ron, Harry, and Hermione discover that Hagrid is trying to keep a dragon illegally, Ron offers to give the dragon to friends of his brother Charlie (who works with dragons for his job) so

that Hagrid will not get into trouble for keeping it. At another point in the novel, Harry and Ron try to save Hermione from a troll that is loose in Hogwarts and they get in trouble for not leaving it to the teachers to handle. Uncharacteristically, Hermione lies to the teachers so that only she will get in trouble instead of the two boys, thus sacrificing herself for her friends. This moment is a key turning point in Hermione's character, as she sheds her towering self-importance and instead begins to be more selfless and humbler. Ron and Hermione also accompany Harry on his quest to protect the Sorcerer's Stone, and when facing the challenges that guard the stone, each of them stays behind so that Harry can advance closer and closer. Ron deliberately allows himself to be hurt playing a game of wizard's chess (in which the pieces are alive and violently break each other when the pieces are taken) so that Harry and Hermione can move forward to the next task. Then, when Hermione figures out a logic puzzle that will only allow her or Harry forward, she argues that Harry should go ahead; she'll return to Ron and send an owl to Dumbledore. Thus, each of them retains humility and understands that the greater good is more important than achieving some kind of personal glory.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione's humility sets them apart from the other characters in the book. In contrast with characters like Voldemort and even Draco Malfoy and Dudley, the novel's three kid protagonists care about others more than they care about themselves. In making these traits key to getting the Sorcerer's Stone, Rowling emphasizes how humility and self-sacrifice are necessary qualities to being the heroes of the book and achieving success in their mission.



RULES AND REBELLION

Although the wizarding world provides Harry with freedom that he did not receive at his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon's house, there are still strict rules that he must follow in both the wizarding world in general and particularly at Hogwarts. Harry does not set out to be a troublemaker, but over the course of the novel, he ends up breaking rule after rule. Harry believes that when the rules are in conflict with doing what he feels is the moral thing to do, it is better to rebel than to submit to them. And because Harry is more often than not rewarded for this rebellious behavior, J.K. Rowling too argues that breaking rules is sometimes necessary in order to do what is right.

As quickly as Harry is introduced to some of the rules of the school, he breaks them when he feels that it will help those who are being picked on, or who would be otherwise targeted. Harry is often rewarded for the way he elevates kindness and helping others over following arbitrary rules. On the first day that Harry learns to fly on a broomstick, a classmate of his named Neville breaks his arm, and the professor, Madam Hooch, whisks him away to the hospital wing. She cautions the

other students not to fly until she gets back, or else they'll be expelled. But when Draco Malfoy, the class bully, picks up a gift from Neville's grandmother called a Remembrall and begins to make fun of Neville, Harry tells him to return it. Malfoy instead dares Harry to get it back, mounting his broom and throwing the Remembrall as far as he can; Harry mounts his broom as well and is able to catch it while flying on his broomstick, but Professor McGonagall sees him. Yet instead of punishing him, she gets him to join the Quidditch team, making him the youngest Quidditch player at Hogwarts in a century. By bravely sticking up for Neville—even when he was not around—Harry is rewarded rather than punished for breaking the rules, a pattern that will continue to crop up throughout the novel. Another instance of rebellion comes a few months later, at Halloween. A dangerous troll is loose in the castle, and all students are instructed to return to their dormitories to take shelter while the teachers deal with the situation. Instead, Harry says that he and Ron should go to find Hermione in the girls' bathroom; she's been crying there all day because Ron made fun of her, and thus she doesn't know about the troll. Unluckily, the troll ends up in the very bathroom that Hermione is hiding in. Although Harry, Ron, and Hermione are able to defeat the massive troll, Professor McGonagall is furious with the students for not being in their dormitories as instructed. But before McGonagall can punish Ron and Harry, Hermione swiftly (and surprisingly) takes the blame for their actions. Thus, again, Harry receives few consequences for not following the rules, and for good reason, too, as he is able to save Hermione as a result.

Harry is not only encouraged towards his rebellious tendencies because he often receives little punishment; he is also encouraged to disregard the rules by Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts. At Christmas, Harry receives a package left anonymously, inside of which is an [Invisibility Cloak](#), which allows the person who wears it to become completely invisible. The package is later revealed to be from Dumbledore, who writes in a note, "use it well." While this doesn't explicitly counsel Harry to break the rules, it certainly allows him to do so, as long as he is using the cloak "well," or for a good purpose. He uses the cloak to break into the restricted section of the library in order to find out more information on [the Sorcerer's Stone](#), ultimately aiding him in keeping the precious Stone away from those with evil intentions. Harry also uses the cloak to try to help Hagrid get rid of the dragon he has secretly raised, because keeping a dragon as a pet is illegal. Thus, again, Harry breaks the rules in order to help his friends try to stay out of trouble and do what he feels is right. Perhaps the ultimate episode of rule-breaking in which Harry, Ron, and Hermione participate occurs when they try get to the Sorcerer's Stone before Snape does, thinking him the villain. They "petrify" (a curse that literally stuns whoever is hit with it) Neville, who tries to stop them from sneaking out at night. They then go to a corridor on the third floor, which has been

expressly forbidden to students. Such blatant rule-breaking allows Harry to get to the Stone, where he is able to save it from getting into Voldemort's possession. Even more than that, Harry's rule-breaking consequently saves the entire magical community from Voldemort—at least for the time being. While Harry's success is validation enough, Dumbledore confirms that he believes Harry did the right thing. He praises the young boy's efforts to fend off Quirrell and Voldemort, and awards Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville enough house points to allow Gryffindor to win the House Cup.

It is worth noting that Dumbledore awards Neville points as well, observing that it takes courage to stand up to one's friends. Thus, it is not that Dumbledore is simply rewarding rebellious behavior; he is rewarding students for doing what they feel in their heart is the right thing to do. And to Rowling, who uses Dumbledore as the highest moral authority in the novel, doing what is right is far more important than following the rules perfectly. If Harry hadn't broken so many rules in his first year of school, Voldemort presumably would have gotten ahold of the Sorcerer's Stone and returned to power with a vengeance, thus cutting short the entire series and ending the magical world as Harry knows it.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in [blue text](#) throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK

The rare and valuable Invisibility Cloak, which makes the wearer invisible, represents the necessity of breaking the rules in order to do what is right. The Cloak belonged to Harry's father, James, but then came into Dumbledore's possession after James died, and Dumbledore is the one who anonymously gifts it to Harry. By giving Harry the cloak, Dumbledore is essentially encouraging—or at least allowing—Harry to break the rules when he feels that it is necessary. Harry dons the cloak for the first time when tries to go to the Restricted Section of the library late at night to find out information about Nicolas Flamel, believing that information about Flamel is the key to figuring out—and protecting—whatever is under the trapdoor in the forbidden corridor. Harry and Hermione also use the cloak when they drop off Norbert with Charlie's friends so that Hagrid won't get in trouble for keeping an illegal dragon. And, in the ultimate instance of breaking the rules for the sake of doing what's right, Harry, Ron, and Hermione don the cloak on the night that they try to prevent [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) from being stolen.



THE MIRROR OF ERISED

The Mirror of Erised, which Harry encounters on accident one night, hidden in a random room, symbolizes how intense, emotionally charged desires can be dangerous. “Erised” is “desire” spelled backwards, and the Mirror fittingly shows the person peering in it the deepest desire of his or her hearts. For Harry, an orphan without a loving family, this means he sees his parents, Lily and James, in the Mirror, as well as the rest of his extended family. While it initially seems innocent and even beneficial for Harry to be able to interact with his fallen family to some extent, the novel warns that even virtuous desires can prove harmful. Indeed, Harry quickly grows obsessed with the Mirror, ignoring virtually everything else in his life and returning three nights in a row (risking punishment for being out of bed) in order to stare into the Mirror’s reflection, as if in a trance. Dumbledore joins Harry on the third night, cautioning him that wizards have been driven insane by what they see in the Mirror, either entranced by the image or maddened by wondering if what it shows is possible. Thus, even though Harry’s desires are pure—he understandably misses his family and wants to see them—his deep yearning for something that can never happen prevents him from living in the present.



THE SORCERER’S STONE

The Sorcerer’s Stone of the novel’s title epitomizes how power can easily corrupt people, particularly those who are already hungry for power and have selfish leanings. The Sorcerer’s Stone is a rare and infinitely valuable object that can turn any metal into gold, and perhaps more temptingly, can create the Elixir of Life, which makes the drinker immortal. This makes the Stone an incredibly powerful object, and as such, it becomes an object of fixation for Voldemort, who is also obsessed with gaining eternal life. Voldemort’s return to power largely hinge on his ability to obtain the Stone, as he tells Harry that it will allow him to regain a body of his own. The quest for the Stone and for unbridled power allows Voldemort to corrupt Professor Quirrell and enlist him as a follower (Quirrell essentially becomes Voldemort’s host body), even though this quest eventually leads to Quirrell’s death. Harry, on the other hand, tries to gain the Stone not for his own power, but rather to prevent others from misusing it. Thus, the Stone intensifies the greed and desire that fester in those who already flirt with the idea of having absolute power, while demonstrating how those who are more humble and virtuous (like Harry, Hagrid, Ron, and Hermione) remain untempted by its power.

Scholastic edition of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* published in 1997.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you’d expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn’t hold with such nonsense.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Vernon Dursley, Dudley Dursley, Petunia Dursley

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

The opening lines of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* are perhaps most remarkable because of their ordinariness. In stark contrast with the magical wizarding world that Rowling builds, the opening chapter centers mostly on the Dursleys, or sees some of the first inklings of magic from the Dursleys eyes. The Dursleys pride themselves on their ordinariness, even aggressively so (as Rowling describes both in this chapter and in the next). Beginning in this way sets up the Dursleys as normal, but the adamant nature of the language in this quote does hint at the fact that the Dursleys, and the book as a whole, will quickly involve “strange or mysterious” things.

The Dursleys put themselves in direct opposition with Harry and his parents, who are anything but ordinary. This contrast ultimately fuels the Dursley’s hatred of Harry, as they try to integrate him into their “normal” lives. But this attempt has the opposite effect: Harry simply feels neglected, isolated, and different from the rest of his family.

☞ “He’ll be famous—a legend—I wouldn’t be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter Day in the future—there will be books written about Harry—every child in our world will know his name!”

“Exactly,” said Dumbledore, looking very seriously over the top of his half-moon glasses. “It would be enough to turn any boy’s head. Famous before he can walk and talk! Famous for something he won’t even remember! Can’t you see how much better off he’ll be, growing up away from all that until he’s ready to take it?”

Related Characters: Albus Dumbledore, Professor



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the

McGonagall (speaker), Harry Potter, Lily Potter, James Potter, Vernon Dursley, Petunia Dursley

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

In the opening pages of the novel, Dumbledore must decide the fate of newly orphaned Harry, because Voldemort has just killed the boy's parents, James and Lily. But when Voldemort attempted to kill Harry, he was unable to and lost all of his powers—making Harry instantly renowned across the wizarding world. In choosing to give Harry to his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, two Muggles (non-magic people), Dumbledore hopes to safeguard Harry against the fame that he is sure will go to the boy's head.

Dumbledore's decision not only sets Harry on a path to retain humility throughout his life, but it also fuels his tendency to put others above himself and even to sacrifice his own well-being for the greater good, as he does later in this book and time and time again through the rest of the *Harry Potter* series. Without these values, it is possible that Voldemort might have acquired the Sorcerer's Stone at the end of the book, and therefore have given a powerful dark wizard eternal life. Dumbledore's wise words in this passage imply that all of this is crucially avoided because Harry is prevented from developing an ego as a result of his astronomical fame.

house, but Vernon warns him not to do anything odd. As Harry explains here, "strange things" often happen around him, and he is punished for them. There is an ironic cruelty to these punishments; Harry understands that he might be different from other kids, and that odd things occur when he is around, but he doesn't know *why* those things happen, as he has not yet discovered that he is a wizard.

The Dursleys, on the other hand, *do* understand his background and why the strange things might happen. But they refuse to allow Harry to understand his own identity, and in addition, they punish him for his difference. This is why it becomes crucially important for Harry to discover magic in order to find a sense of belonging. That revelation will inform Harry that these things happen for a reason, and that there are others like him who have also felt different and odd.

☞ At school, Harry had no one. Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Vernon Dursley, Dudley Dursley

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

After the visit to the zoo (in which the glass in the snake tank magically vanishes), Vernon forces Harry to stay in his cupboard for a week with no meals. Harry spends the time wishing that some distant relative might whisk him away, or that his life might somehow be different. Harry is different; as a wizard, he doesn't fully belong in the Dursley's hyper-normal world.

Yet perhaps Harry's biggest challenge is not simply that he doesn't fit in with the Dursleys; it's that they offer him no affection or support at all. This is evident in their home, in the fact that he lives in a cupboard with no possessions, that he wears Dudley's enormous hand-me-downs, and that the Dursleys won't even fix Harry's broken glasses. But even these things might still have allowed Harry to find friends—it is Dudley's hatred of Harry and his cruelty toward him at school, no doubt modeled by his parents, that leads to Harry's complete isolation. Thus, not only do the Dursleys not provide him with love or affection, but they actively ensure that Harry remains vulnerable and isolated.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ The problem was, strange things often happened around Harry and it was just no good telling the Dursleys he didn't make them happen.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Vernon Dursley, Dudley Dursley, Petunia Dursley

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

For Dudley's birthday, Vernon and Petunia plan to take Dudley and his friend to the zoo. Harry usually stays behind with a neighbor, but this time she is unavailable and they are forced to take him as well. Harry is excited to get out of the

Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ “Then she met that Potter at school and they left and got married and had you, and of course I knew you’d be just the same, just as strange, just as — as — *abnormal*— and then, if you please, she went and got herself blown up and we got landed with you!”

Related Characters: Petunia Dursley (speaker), Harry Potter, Rubeus Hagrid, Lily Potter, James Potter

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

When Hagrid informs Harry that he is a wizard, Harry is stunned to learn this—and even more stunned to learn that his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon knew that this was the case and didn’t tell him. Petunia responds with this resounding speech, detailing how disgusted she was with Lily and James. This quote again demonstrates the issue that the Dursleys have with Harry and his parents, and why Harry feels like he doesn’t belong in their world. For the Dursleys, who prioritize being normal over anything else, Harry represents a threat to that normality and that order in the world, which is why they often punish him when odd things happen around him. As a result, Harry feels like he is different from others, but it is not until this scene that he truly realizes why.

Additionally, this quote reveals how little the Dursleys care that Harry is family, and the lack of love that Harry received growing up from the people who were entrusted to take care of him. Thus, when Hagrid arrives, Harry immediately starts to rely on him for friendship and love, and Hagrid turns into a sort of father or uncle figure for Harry, guiding him through his new identity and providing support when he needs it.

☞ “See, there was this wizard who went...bad. As bad as you could go. Worse. Worse than worse. [...] This wizard, about twenty years ago now, started lookin’ fer followers. Got ’em, too — some were afraid, some just wanted a bit o’ his power, ’cause he was gettin’ himself power, all right. Dark days, Harry.”

Related Characters: Rubeus Hagrid (speaker), Harry Potter, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Quirrell, Lily Potter, James Potter

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Hagrid’s revelation that Harry is a wizard, Hagrid reveals yet another piece of Harry’s backstory. Hagrid informs Harry of a powerful evil wizard named Voldemort who killed Harry’s parents, Lily and James. This description of how Voldemort came to power introduces the idea that magic comes with a certain degree of power, and the desire for too much power can cause people to be corrupt and evil. This desire is also a form of greed, which Rowling also associates with evil. Voldemort’s desire for power becomes all-consuming, to the point where he kills people who aim to stand in his way, like Harry’s parents.

It is also interesting to note how one person’s power can corrupt not only themselves but other people, who want a part of that power as well. This is ultimately how Voldemort comes to overtake Quirrell, who reveals explicitly that he joined Voldemort in order to gain more power.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ Harry wished he had about eight more eyes. He turned his head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once: the shops, the things outside them, the people doing their shopping.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Rubeus Hagrid

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

The day after Hagrid reveals to Harry that he is a wizard, Harry goes with Hagrid to Diagon Alley to buy his school supplies for Hogwarts. In this magical street, Harry is amazed at all of the sights. This marks a turning point in Harry’s journey: it introduces him to a world in which he truly belongs. And while it’s definitely not the most “normal” of places, its strangeness is what attracts Harry to it. If the wizarding world were more like the Muggle (non-magical) world, it wouldn’t be as amazing to Harry. But also, because the wizarding is so integrated into the Muggle world, it implies that magic is always there—one just has to know where to look for it. This is the first example in which J.K. Rowling demonstrates how the magic Harry discovers in Diagon Alley, while being literal, can also be metaphorical. To Harry, who has always felt that he is different from those

around him, discovering a place where he belongs can be an exciting and even magical feeling.

☞ “Don’ you worry, Harry. You’ll learn last enough. Everyone starts at the beginning at Hogwarts, you’ll be just fine. Just be yerself. I know it’s hard. Yeh’ve been singled out, an’ that’s always hard. But yeh’ll have a great time at Hogwarts — I did — still do, ’smatter of fact.”

Related Characters: Rubeus Hagrid (speaker), Harry Potter

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of Harry and Hagrid’s trip to Diagon Alley, Harry reveals an insecurity of his: that everyone already expects great things from him, but he feels like he doesn’t know anything. This reaction to Harry’s fame demonstrates his humility: rather than feeling entitled to his fame, or understanding that he’s always been different for a reason, Harry worries that he may not live up to everyone else’s expectations and may not actually belong—that he may, in fact, be too different to fit into this new wizarding world.

Hagrid’s response, in turn, highlights the bond of friendship and love that they have already formed, even after a single day. Hagrid has become like a father to Harry, guiding him through his surroundings and providing comfort for his distress. This support is what gives Harry some degree of confidence that he can learn and make friends. And in affirming that he himself has a great time at Hogwarts, Hagrid subtly reminds Harry that he will be there to help him through his struggles.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ “Go on, have a pasty,” said Harry, who had never had anything to share before or, indeed, anyone to share it with. It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry’s pasties, cakes, and candies (the sandwiches lay forgotten).

Related Characters: Harry Potter (speaker), Ron Weasley, Rubeus Hagrid, Draco Malfoy

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 102

Explanation and Analysis

On the train to Hogwarts, Ron joins Harry in his compartment. They had met briefly on the platform at the station, but on the train they strike up a fast friendship, sharing details about their lives, their families, and their childhoods. Harry’s description of having something to share and having someone to share it with is a perfect encapsulation of why friendship is so essential to him; it’s a way for him to have a connection with others that he has never had before. The relationship he developed with Hagrid is more familial, but Ron represents a peer whose friendship becomes another essential gateway to the wizarding world and a crucial support system throughout Harry’s time at Hogwarts.

This moment also shows the selflessness that Harry has developed as a result of never having had anything of his own, and how that selflessness extends to his friendships. This can be seen in direct contrast to Malfoy, whose friendships are based on family status or the physical demeanor of the people he considers friends.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☞ Harry had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place. It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles that were floating in midair over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting. These tables were laid with glittering golden plates and goblets.

Related Characters: Harry Potter

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry arrives at Hogwarts for the first time, the students are led through the Great Hall before their sorting ceremony. Harry’s word choice here is particularly important, as it is in distinct contrast with the word choice that has been used to describe the world surrounding the Dursleys in the first several chapters. Whereas they are only satisfied when their world is thoroughly normal, Hogwarts is a “strange” and “splendid” place. Harry’s description even implies that it is splendid not *in spite* of it being strange, but *because* it is strange. Harry, who has always felt abnormal with the Dursleys on Privet Drive,

finally feels that his difference no longer signifies that he does not belong. Like Harry's first experience in Diagon Alley, the excitement he feels at the magic surrounding him at Hogwarts is a metaphor for the excitement that any child coming of age might feel in finding a place where they finally feel comfortable being themselves.

“Not Slytherin, eh?” said the small voice. “Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that — no? Well, if you're sure — better be GRYFFINDOR!”

Harry heard the hat shout the last word to the whole hall. He took off the hat and walked shakily toward the Gryffindor table. He was so relieved to have been chosen and not put in Slytherin, he hardly noticed that he was getting the loudest cheer yet.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Draco Malfoy

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry and the other first years arrive at Hogwarts, they are immediately sorted into one of four Houses by a magical sorting hat that is placed on their heads. The sorting hat serves as a magical conduit to help students find people and a place with which they fit in. The inner conversation that Harry has with the sorting hat reveals key aspects of his personality. First, it reveals Harry's humility and also his instant distaste for power and greed. Although many people have referenced the fact that Harry could be a great wizard, he worries about being placed in Slytherin, as he already knows it to be a House where power-hungry (Voldemort) and arrogant (Malfoy) wizards typically end up.

Harry, by contrast, would rather end up in a place where he feels he belongs, and perhaps most importantly, where he knows that his friend Ron Weasley will likely end up—Gryffindor. Harry's humility is further emphasized when he hardly notices the cheers for him. Instead, he is simply relieved to find his place, and not to be associated with the primary House from which evil wizards have emerged.

Chapter 8 Quotes

“I don't know, sir,” said Harry. Snape's lips curled into a sneer. “Tut, tut — fame clearly isn't everything.”

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Professor Snape (speaker), Albus Dumbledore, James Potter

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

Harry's first Potions lesson with Professor Snape goes poorly, as Snape immediately singles him out, asking him complicated potions questions in order to humiliate him. Snape's instant dislike of Harry stems from two sources, both which lead him to believe that Harry will be a very arrogant student. The first (and primary) reason, which is revealed later on in the book, is that Snape assumes that Harry will be like his father, James, whom he also believed to be arrogant. The second is that Snape assumes that because of Harry's fame among the wizarding world, he will have gained a large ego in his first eleven years. This is exactly what Dumbledore aimed to avoid in sending Harry to live with the Dursleys early on; Dumbledore was indeed successful in doing so, as one of Harry's primary qualities is humility.

Harry's dislike for Snape, in return, is due to Snape's treatment of him in these first moments of class. Harry understands that Snape is taking advantage of his power as a teacher, and Rowling emphasizes here and throughout the story that a desire for power and an abuse of that power is associated with characters who are bad.

Chapter 9 Quotes

Harry ignored her. Blood was pounding in his ears. He mounted the broom and kicked hard against the ground and up, up he soared; air rushed through his hair, and his robes whipped out behind him — and in a rush of fierce joy he realized he'd found something he could do without being taught — this was easy, this was *wonderful*.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy, Neville Longbottom, Madam Hooch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

During Harry's first flying lesson, Neville falls, and Madam Hooch takes him to the hospital wing, warning the other students not to get on their brooms without her there. Malfoy immediately grabs Neville's Remembrall, which had fallen on the ground, and dares Harry to come get it. This moment, when Harry simultaneously tries to defend Neville and also discovers his talent for flying, provides two key insights into his character. The first is that Harry has no problem breaking the rules (ignoring warnings from Madam Hooch and Hermione) when he is doing what he believes is right. He does not hesitate to defend Neville, even while Neville is out of earshot, and works to get the Remembrall back. And because Harry is eventually rewarded for this rule-breaking by earning a spot on the Quidditch team, Rowling provides positive reinforcement for Harry to continue breaking rules. Secondly, this moment demonstrates another aspect of magic that exhilarates Harry and allows him to feel like he belongs. Finding something that proves his natural magical ability validates the idea that Harry does in fact belong in the wizarding world.

following the rules up to that point, implicitly acknowledges that sometimes it is necessary to break the rules by lying to Professor McGonagall. After all, had Harry and Ron not broken the rules themselves, she could very well have been dead. Additionally, Hermione could easily have told the truth, saying that Harry and Ron came to her rescue explicitly to save her. Yet by choosing to lie, she signals to Harry and Ron that she understands the occasional necessity of breaking the rules, which in turn instigates their friendship.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☞☞ "It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself standing alone, the best of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible."

Related Characters: Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Lily Potter, James Potter

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

Harry accidentally discovers the Mirror of Erised, in which he sees his parents, Lily and James, standing next to him. He returns the next evening with Ron, who sees something very different: himself as Head Boy and Quidditch Captain. Harry quickly grows obsessed with what he sees in the Mirror, returning again for a third night despite Ron's caution. There, Dumbledore explains what the mirror shows but offers his own warning as well.

Up to this point, the arguments that power and greed are destructive forms of desire have largely taken the shape of the spoiled Dudley and the truly evil Voldemort. But this scene demonstrates how even innocent desires can be somewhat dangerous. Harry's yearning to be with his family is completely pure, and makes sense given how central love, family, and friendship are Harry's growth. But at the same time, the Mirror has the potential for prohibiting him from

Chapter 10 Quotes

☞☞ Hermione hung her head. Harry was speechless. Hermione was the last person to do anything against the rules, and here she was, pretending she had, to get them out of trouble.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Professor McGonagall

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

On Halloween, when a troll is reported loose in the dungeon, Harry and Ron ignore the instructions to return to their dorms and set off to save Hermione, who is in the girls' bathroom and doesn't yet know about the troll. Harry and Ron are able to defeat the troll, but Professor McGonagall is furious that they went after the troll in the first place. In this passage, Hermione lies, claiming that *she* went after the troll to take it on herself, and that she could have died if Harry and Ron hadn't helped her.

This constitutes a turning point both in Hermione's character, and in the relationship between Hermione and the two boys. Hermione, who has been adamant about

actually living a full life, to the point where he completely ignores everything else and becomes paralyzed by that desire.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☞ “SO WHAT?” Harry shouted. “Don’t you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort’s coming back! Haven’t you heard what it was like when he was trying to take over? There won’t be any Hogwarts to get expelled from! He’ll flatten it, or turn it into a school for the Dark Arts! [...] I’m going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! Voldemort killed my parents, remember?”

Related Characters: Harry Potter (speaker), Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Snape

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 270

Explanation and Analysis

After Dumbledore is called away on urgent business, Harry becomes convinced that Snape is going to steal the Sorcerer’s Stone for Voldemort and sets out to try and steal it first. When Hermione warns him that he could be expelled for doing this, Harry delivers this impassioned speech. His words reveal several key aspects to his character. First, he is adamant that it is more important to break the rules than follow them if it means doing what he truly believes is right. In addition to saving the wizarding world in general from Voldemort’s return, Harry also speaks about Hogwarts specifically because it has become so important to him as a home and as a center for his newfound community.

Additionally, it reveals Harry’s humility and his willingness to sacrifice himself for others. He understands that in trying to face Voldemort, or even in trying to go after Snape, it is very likely that he will be killed. But if he is able to thwart them to some degree, he would rather put the greater good over his own well-being. Without this quality and Harry, both in this book and throughout the series, evil would triumph much more often. Thus, humility and self-sacrifice are also intrinsically associated with and requisites for being good.

☞ “Oh, come off it, you don’t think we’d let you go alone?”
“Of course not,” said Hermione briskly. “How do you think you’d get to the Stone without us? I’d better go and look through my books, there might be something useful...”

Related Characters: Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger (speaker), Harry Potter, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Snape

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 271

Explanation and Analysis

After Harry makes the decision to go after the Sorcerer’s Stone and to try and prevent Snape and Voldemort from obtaining it, Ron and Hermione affirm that they also want to join him on his quest. Ron and Hermione’s decision to sacrifice themselves, just as Harry does, once again cements the association between putting others above oneself and being a thoroughly good person. Hermione’s assertion that Harry wouldn’t be able to make it to the Stone without them also highlights the importance of friendship in the story. Up until this point, Ron and Hermione’s friendship has afforded him comfort and even protection, such as when Hermione defends Harry when his broom is being jinxed. But here the three protagonists also demonstrate how friendship can help overcome obstacles. When they go after the Stone, each of them takes the lead on different challenges that they encounter, and only together, through their shared expertise and commitment, is Harry able to make it to the Stone.

☞ “That’s chess!” snapped Ron. “You’ve got to make some sacrifices! I’ll make my move and she’ll take me — that leaves you free to checkmate the king, Harry!”

“But —”

“Do you want to stop Snape or not?”

“Ron —”

“Look, if you don’t hurry up, he’ll already have the Stone!”

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger (speaker), Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Snape

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 283

Explanation and Analysis

As Harry, Ron, and Hermione battle their way past different obstacles in order to get to the Sorcerer's Stone, they come upon one room in which they must take the place of life-sized chess pieces and play their way across the board. Ron takes the lead in the game, but realizes at the end that he must allow himself to be taken (and brutally struck down) in order to win the game. Ron picks up on Harry's commitment to protect other people over himself, and sees the value in making sure that Snape and Voldemort don't get the Stone, no matter what the cost.

Additionally, Ron makes a more specific sacrifice in this passage. Rowling has already revealed through the Mirror of Erised that Ron's innermost desire is to outshine his brothers, and certainly preventing Voldemort from getting the Stone would help along the way. But rather than trying to take all the glory for himself, Ron understands that this is Harry's fight more than it is his own. Thus, in addition to making a sacrifice for the wizarding world as a whole, Ron also sacrifices his personal desire to prove himself in order to allow Harry to continue on.

💬 “Harry — you’re a great wizard, you know.”
 “I’m not as good as you,” said Harry, very embarrassed, as she let go of him.
 “Me!” said Hermione. “Books! And cleverness! There are more important things — friendship and bravery and — oh Harry — be *careful*!”

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Hermione Granger (speaker), Ron Weasley

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 287

Explanation and Analysis

The final obstacle to get to the Sorcerer's Stone is a logic puzzle with seven potions that Hermione figures out quickly—but only one of them can go forward. Hermione realizes this, and, in a parallel to Ron's decision to stay behind so that Harry and Hermione could go forward, she

agrees that Harry should be the one to go forward. Just as Ron has a desire to prove himself against his brothers, Hermione has her own desire to prove herself as well. Coming from a Muggle family, she only has her intelligence to demonstrate that she deserves to be at Hogwarts. Yet she, too, humbly sets this need aside in order to allow Harry to stand up to Snape and Voldemort.

Her words of comfort to Harry also get to the heart of why friendship is so important to the story. Her and Ron's friendship is what allows Harry to make it this far in the first place, as he could certainly not have done it alone. But here Hermione also eases Harry's fears: in the beginning of the novel, when people said that he would be a great wizard, he worried that he would not be able to live up to this expectation. Yet now, she affirms that he truly is a great wizard, giving him the confidence to continue on without her.

Chapter 17 Quotes

💬 “A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it.”

Related Characters: Professor Quirrell (speaker), Harry Potter, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Snape

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 291

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry arrives in the final room guarding the Sorcerer's Stone, he is confronted to his surprise by Professor Quirrell. Quirrell admits that he, and not Snape, has been doing Voldemort's bidding throughout the school year. He relays what amounts to Voldemort's guiding philosophy about good, evil, and power in this quote, arguing that good and evil do not exist—there are only weak and strong people. It is clear, however, that Rowling herself does not espouse this philosophy, as Quirrell is possessed by Voldemort, the pinnacle of evil in the novel. Thus, she demonstrates that this kind of philosophy, and this kind of obsession with power, only serves those who are evil. It is made even clearer when Harry wisely refuses to buy into this philosophy himself; because the protagonist of the story, whom readers already know to be inherently good,

rejects it, readers come to understand that the desire for power is a hallmark of those who are evil. Additionally, regarding strength and weakness, a lesson can be found in the case of Neville and Malfoy, for example: it is better to be a good person and to be weak than to be a bad person and to be strong.

then, so that she could sacrifice herself in order to save her son's life. Because Dumbledore emphasizes that Quirrell could not touch Harry because of his hatred, greed, and ambition, it sets up a dichotomy between power and greed as associated with evil, and love and family as associated with good.

“Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed, and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.”

Related Characters: Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Quirrell, Lily Potter

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 299

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, after Harry successfully prevents Quirrell from obtaining the Sorcerer's Stone for Voldemort, Dumbledore explains to Harry why Quirrell couldn't touch him without feeling like he was getting burned. This revelation resolves several loose threads that have run throughout the story and also reinforces the vital and protective nature of love. Lily's love gives Harry a literal form of magical protection that prevents Quirrell from harming him. Additionally, this helps to explain another mystery: why Harry survived Voldemort's attempt to kill him as a baby at the beginning of the novel, when no one else survived. Lily's love had worked in the same way even

“You see, only one who wanted to *find* the Stone — find it, but not use it — would be able to get it, otherwise they'd just see themselves making gold or drinking Elixir of Life.”

Related Characters: Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Voldemort / You-Know-Who, Professor Quirrell

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 300

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry is in the hospital wing at Hogwarts, asking Dumbledore for clarifications on what exactly happened on the night he tried to protect the Sorcerer's Stone, he asks Dumbledore why he was able to get the Stone out of the Mirror of Erised, while Quirrell was unable to. Dumbledore explains how he used the Mirror to be able to discern who wanted the Stone for selfish purposes and who did not. In essence, this distinction reinforces Quirrell's (and Voldemort's) inherent greediness, as they wish to obtain this object for themselves in order to gain more and more power. Harry, on the other hand, desires the Stone for purely selfless purposes. Harry's humility and willingness to sacrifice himself in order to protect the Stone from Quirrell and Voldemort prevents Voldemort from returning to power and reconquering the wizarding world (at least for the time being). Thus, Harry's humility becomes the key to acquiring the Sorcerer's Stone, and therefore to becoming the hero of the book.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: THE BOY WHO LIVED

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley live “perfectly normal” lives. Vernon Dursley is a large, “beefy” man who works at a drilling firm. Petunia Dursley is thin and blonde and tall. Mrs. Dursley has a sister, Lily Potter, whom she pretends doesn’t exist, because she and her husband are as “unDursleyish” as possible. Lily and her husband, James, have a small son who is about the same age as the Dursley’s toddler, Dudley, and the Dursleys don’t want their children mixing either.

One day, Vernon starts to notice some strange and mysterious things: an owl fluttering by their window; a cat reading a map; people in cloaks whispering excitedly together. Vernon grows furious, thinking that it must be some silly stunt. When Vernon arrives at work, he quickly forgets about the incidents.

When Vernon goes to a bakery on his lunch break, he passes another group of people wearing odd cloaks. He catches mention of “the Potters” and “their son Harry” and is flooded with fear. After work, Vernon accidentally runs right into a man in a velvet cloak. He apologizes, but the man hugs Vernon and tells him not to worry—nothing could upset him today because “You-Know-Who has gone at last,” and tells Vernon that even “Muggles” like himself should be celebrating. Vernon is stunned by the encounter and hurries home. On the street he again notices the cat that had been reading the map earlier.

Petunia, by contrast, has had a “nice, normal day.” Vernon tries to act as though his day has been normal, too. They watch the evening news: a reporter explains that there had been owl sightings all over the country, as well as odd weather like shooting stars. Vernon asks Petunia if she’s heard from Lily, wondering if the news might have anything to do with “her crowd,” but Petunia sharply denies that she has. Vernon and Petunia then go to bed.

Meanwhile, on the street in front of the house, a very old man with a long beard and long robes appears: Albus Dumbledore. Albus flicks open a cigarette lighter and clicks it, causing all of the nearby streetlamps to go out. He looks at the cat on the street, which transforms into a woman with a tight black bun and an emerald cloak: Professor McGonagall.

Harry Potter’s story opens not with the world of magic and fantasy that will come to define him, but rather with the non-magic world in which he feels he doesn’t belong. Even without knowing about magic, readers get hints that Harry and his parents do not fit into the “perfectly normal” lives of the Dursleys.



After establishing the normalcy of the Dursleys’ lives, Rowling starts to introduce the magical elements of the story. She also establishes the Dursley’s intense dislike of anything abnormal, which ultimately fuels their mistreatment of Harry and his magical abilities.



Rowling gives hints at some of the circumstances surrounding Lily and James’s death, the defeat of Voldemort, and Harry’s immediate launch to fame. But because the passage is from Vernon’s perspective, his fear is ultimately revealed to be a reaction to anything even remotely odd or out of place.



The repetition of the word “normal” again sets up the Dursley’s hatred for anything different. The owl sightings and shooting stars, however, begin to introduce elements of magic and wonder to the story. These phenomena explain why Vernon and Petunia detest Lily, who was a part of that world.



Dumbledore and McGonagall become the first true representatives of the wizarding world, as Rowling hints at the power of the possessing magical abilities—Dumbledore is able to darken a street, while McGonagall can transform effortlessly into a cat.



Dumbledore wonders why Professor McGonagall hasn't been celebrating. She says that people have been too careless with their celebrating, so that even the Muggles have noticed that something strange is going on. McGonagall continues, talking about the rumors flying around concerning "You-Know-Who." Dumbledore corrects her, saying that she should not be afraid to call him by his real name: Voldemort.

Professor McGonagall explains to Dumbledore that Lily and James Potter are dead, and that Voldemort tried to kill their son, Harry, as well, but he couldn't. No one knows why, or how, but people are saying that somehow Voldemort's power was broken when he tried to kill Harry. Dumbledore confirms the rumors; Professor McGonagall tears up at the news.

Dumbledore tells McGonagall that Harry will be entrusted into the care of his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon. McGonagall is appalled, saying she has been watching them all day, and that they couldn't be less like wizards. And their son Dudley is horribly spoiled—all day, he's been kicking his mother and screaming for sweets.

Dumbledore assures McGonagall that the Dursleys' home is the best place for Harry, and he will leave a letter so that Vernon and Petunia can explain everything to Harry about what's happened when he's older. McGonagall wonders why Dumbledore would want Harry to grow up in the Muggle world rather than the wizarding world—there will probably be a "Harry Potter" day in the future, and everyone in the wizarding world will know his name. Dumbledore argues that this is why it's important to raise him away from the wizarding world, so that he doesn't have to deal with that kind of fame so young.

At that moment, Hagrid, an enormous man with wild, bushy black hair and a beard, arrives on a flying motorcycle with a bundle in his arms—baby Harry. Harry has a tuft of jet-black hair and a lightning bolt-shaped scar on his forehead from Voldemort's curse. Hagrid gives a tearful goodbye to Harry, howling in sorrow over James and Lily's deaths.

Even without fully understanding who Voldemort is, readers already know that people dread him so much as to call him by the euphemism "You-Know-Who," thus immediately establishing the fear that his power inspires.



McGonagall's story sets up one of the key themes of the book: the vitality of familial love. Although it is not explicitly stated until the end of the book, Lily's love and the sacrifice of her life for Harry's is what allowed Harry to break Voldemort's power.



McGonagall confirms the idea that while the Dursleys think that the wizards do not belong in their world, so too do the wizards think that the Dursleys are abnormal and outsiders. Additionally, Rowling also hints at Dudley's association with greed early on with the reference to his desire for sweets.



Dumbledore's decision to leave Harry in the Muggle world introduces the value of humility in the story. Rather than immersing Harry in fame for the entirety of his young life, Dumbledore ensures that Harry has a childhood away from that fame, so that he does not develop an inflated ego and is able to maintain the humility that becomes so central to his character throughout the rest of the book.



Hagrid already demonstrates his love for Harry, even as a baby. When, eleven years later, the Dursleys prove unable to provide Harry with love and deny him the knowledge that he is a wizard, Hagrid steps in to teach Harry, ultimately becoming a father figure for him and exhibiting that love.



Dumbledore then lays Harry gently on the Dursley's doorstep and tucks a letter inside Harry's blanket. Hagrid then gets back on his motorcycle, McGonagall reverts to cat form and slinks away, and Dumbledore returns the light to the streetlamps. He says a final "Good luck, Harry," and then vanishes into the dark. Harry continues to sleep, grasping the letter. He doesn't know how famous he is, how special he is, or how people all over the country are meeting in secret at that very moment, raising their glasses to Harry Potter, "the boy who lived."

Harry's fame and extraordinariness among wizards, as well as the tender care he receives from Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Hagrid, forms a stark contrast with how Harry's life shapes up, as detailed in the following chapter.



CHAPTER 2: THE VANISHING GLASS

Ten years later, on Dudley's birthday, Petunia raps on the door to Harry's tiny room in the cupboard under the stairs. Harry has just woken up from a good dream: there had been a flying motorcycle in it. Petunia yells at him to get up and make bacon for Dudley.

The time jump demonstrates how Harry has moved from a loving home as a baby to a completely unloving one over the next ten years. The Dursleys demonstrate again and again in this chapter how family, if it does not provide love to children, can make a child feel isolated and vulnerable, as Harry does.



The kitchen table is strewn with Dudley's birthday presents: a computer, a second television, a racing bike (though why he wants a bike is a mystery to Harry, because Dudley is very fat). Harry, by contrast, has always been small and skinny—and he looks even smaller and skinnier because he wears Dudley's old clothes.

Here, Rowling makes an early association with desire and greed. Dudley's greed for presents reflects on his bad character, and this association becomes a predecessor for Voldemort's and Quirrell's greed and desire for power later on.



Harry has black hair, bright green eyes, and round glasses feebly held together with tape because of all the times Dudley has punched him in the face. Harry also has a unique scar in the shape of a lightning bolt on his forehead, which, according to Petunia, is from the car crash in which Harry's parents died.

Petunia and Vernon express their dislike for wizards and magic so much that they deny Harry the knowledge of who he is, who his parents were, and how they died—in essence denying him any sense of identity.



Harry is frying eggs when Dudley comes into the kitchen and counts his presents. Dudley is disappointed to see that he has only thirty-seven—one less than last year. He is about to throw a tantrum when Petunia tells him that they'll buy him two more presents when they go out later in the day.

Dudley not only has greed (in terms of demanding things that he doesn't need), but he also appears to be greedy simply for greed's sake, making sure that he has a certain number of presents to ensure that he is getting more presents than he did on previous birthdays.



As Dudley opens his presents, the phone rings in the house. Their neighbor, Mrs. Figg, is calling to say that she can't take Harry for the day while the rest of the family celebrate Dudley's birthday. Petunia, Vernon, and Dudley are all furious. Dudley starts to cry, saying that Harry spoils everything. But then his best friend, Piers Polkiss arrives, and Dudley stops pretending to cry at once. It is then decided that Harry will go with the Dursleys to the zoo, because they don't want to leave him alone at home. Before they leave, Vernon warns Harry that there would be no "funny business" or Harry would stay in his cupboard from then until Christmas.

Harry promises not to do anything, though he understands why Vernon doesn't believe him: strange things often happen around Harry. Once, Petunia had cut his hair to be almost bald, but his hair had miraculously grown back the next day. Another time, Petunia had tried to force him into a "revolting" sweater of Dudley's, but it had shrunk until it could only fit a puppet. And another time, he had been inexplicably found on the school roof after Dudley had been chasing him. He had been punished severely each time.

In the car, Vernon starts to complain about everything around him: Harry, work, the bank, and motorcycles. Harry mentions his dream about a flying motorcycle, which prompts Vernon to shout, "MOTORCYCLES DON'T FLY" in a rage. Harry wishes he hadn't said anything: he knows that the Dursleys don't like him talking about anything acting in a way that it shouldn't, as if he might get "dangerous ideas."

At the zoo, Harry has the best morning he's had in a long time. He walks around the zoo apart from the Dursleys, and is able to finish one of the desserts that Dudley doesn't want when they eat in the restaurant. After lunch, they visit the reptile house. Vernon and Dudley try to get a python to move behind a glass tank, but it doesn't budge. Dudley moves on, bored.

Harry looks at the snake, which suddenly opens its eyes and winks. Harry thinks that he sees the snake roll its eyes at Vernon and Dudley. Harry tells the snake that it must be annoying, and the snake agrees. Harry asks the snake where it comes from, and the snake jabs its tail towards a sign saying it's from Brazil but has been bred in the zoo.

Even without telling Harry that he has special abilities, Vernon and Petunia find ways to punish him for those abilities. This demonstrates the way that they are trying to fit him into their "normal" lives, rather than allowing him to come into his own. Additionally, they demonstrate the absolute anger they have towards Harry as a result, as Dudley cries that Harry will even be included in the trip. This again reinforces the image of the lack of love Harry receives at home.



Despite how hard the Dursleys try to fit Harry into a normal mold, his magical abilities lead to odd events like the ones described here. The Dursley's cruelty is particularly severe in these episodes, because they punish Harry for reasons that they withhold from him so that he won't know about his magical abilities.



Even small things, like the mention of a flying motorcycle in a dream, is too abnormal for Vernon, and so again he punishes Harry, this time by shouting at him. Harry also hints at what is underpinning Vernon's anger: Vernon and Petunia fear the power Harry might wield against them if he understood his magic.



Harry's description of the zoo visit only highlights the fact that Harry is often abused by his family, if visiting a zoo without them and eating a dessert that his cousin doesn't want constitutes a very good morning.



Harry's conversation with the snake emphasizes Harry's isolation as well as the fact that his magic sets him apart from the others. Harry has become better friends with a snake in a single minute than he has with his cousin Dudley in the course of ten years.



At the sight of the snake moving, Dudley punches Harry in the ribs, knocking him out of the way. When Harry looks up, Dudley and his friend Piers leap back with howls of horror: the glass has vanished. The snake slides onto the floor, and Harry is certain he hears the snake thanking him as it slithers out of the reptile house. The group returns to the car and drives home. Back at the house, Vernon spits out the words, “Go—cupboard—stay—no meals.”

In his dark cupboard, Harry wonders what time it is, hoping that he can steal food when the Dursleys go to sleep. He had lived with them for ten miserable years, as long as he could remember. He can’t remember his parents or the car crash that killed them—only a strange green light.

When he was younger, Harry dreamed that some unknown relation would come and take him away. Sometimes he thought that strangers in the street recognized him (waving, bowing, or shaking his hand), but they always seemed to vanish whenever Harry tried to get a closer look at them. At school, though, Harry “[has] no one.” Everyone knows that Dudley hates him, and no one dares to disagree with Dudley and his formidable gang.

CHAPTER 3: THE LETTERS FROM NO ONE

The snake’s escape brings on Harry’s longest punishment, ending as the summer holidays begin. Harry then spends as much time as possible out of the house, trying to avoid Dudley’s gang and thinking about the new school he will be attending in the fall. Dudley will be going to a different school, and this offers Harry a tiny ray of hope.

One day in July, Dudley parades around the living room in his new school uniform: maroon tailcoats, orange knickerbockers, a flat straw hat, and a walking cane. Harry tries to stifle his laughter as Vernon and Petunia beam with pride at their son. The next day, Harry finds Petunia dyeing Dudley’s old clothes gray for Harry’s uniform. Harry worries that he will look like he’s wearing “bits of old elephant skin” on his first day of school.

Even though Harry cannot explain what happened, and though he truly did nothing wrong, Vernon punishes him severely for the strange circumstances that unfold around him. It is worth noting that Harry’s ability to talk to snakes is a crucial detail in the second book in the series, [Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets](#).



Even though Harry’s parents loved him, the fact that he cannot remember them means that the Dursleys are the only family he has ever really known—and they make him feel completely unloved and abuse him.



Here, Rowling emphasizes the isolation that Harry feels not only at home, but also at school, and how this profound isolation causes him to yearn for an alternate family that might rescue him. In the same passage, Rowling provides a glimmer of hope, hinting at the world in which Harry truly belongs.



Even before Harry is informed of his magical abilities, the new school he is slated to attend still serves as an opportunity for Harry to find a place in which he feels he can belong, away from his cousin’s torment.



While Harry worries about being able to fit in with the other students in his new school, he clearly doesn’t care about fitting in with Dudley or the Dursleys. Thus, just as they feel that Harry is abnormal and doesn’t have a place in their world, Harry acknowledges that he doesn’t belong in their world and yearns to find a place of his own.



As the family sits down for breakfast, the mail arrives. Vernon sends Harry to get it, and Harry realizes with excitement and wonder that there is a letter for him, addressed to “the cupboard under the stairs.” Harry starts to open it, but Dudley shouts that Harry has a letter, and Vernon promptly snatches it away. He reads it, his face turning red. Petunia then reads it and nearly faints. They yell at the boys to get out, though Harry furiously protests that he deserves to read the letter, as it was addressed directly to him.

Vernon throws Harry and Dudley out into the hall and slams the door. Harry listens to his and Petunia’s conversation, as they worry how someone might know where Harry sleeps in their house. Petunia says they should write back, but Vernon argues that they should ignore the letter. He reminds her that when they took Harry in, they swore they would “stamp out that dangerous nonsense.”

That evening, Harry again demands to see his letter. Instead, Vernon tells Harry that he’s getting too big for his cupboard, and he and Petunia want Harry to move into Dudley’s second bedroom, which Dudley has been using to store all of his toys. It takes Harry one trip to move everything he owns. Downstairs, he can hear Dudley bawling at the news. Harry sighs—he would rather be back in his cupboard with the letter than in a bedroom without it.

The next morning, another letter arrives for Harry, this time addressed to “the smallest bedroom.” Vernon wrestles the letter away from Harry once more. The morning after that, Harry tries to sneak downstairs early to wait on the corner for the postman, but Vernon is already guarding the door. When three letters arrive for Harry, Vernon tears them into pieces. He then nails up the mail slot.

Over the next three days, the letters continue to arrive—pushed under the door, inside the two dozen eggs that the milkman delivered, pelting out of the fireplace. After this final incident, Vernon declares that they’re all leaving for a trip. In the car five minutes later, Vernon drives wildly, as if trying to shake someone off their trail.

The letter excites Harry so much because it represents the possibility of someone who knows about him and who wants to communicate with him. Thus, the mere idea of the letter, even without knowing what its contents hold, makes him feel less isolated and unloved.



Vernon and Petunia, in contrast to Harry’s excitement, treat the letter as a dangerous possibility. In referring to magic as “dangerous nonsense” that needs to be “stamp[ed] out,” Vernon underscores the value he and Petunia place on normality.



The inequity of Dudley and Harry’s possessions and rooms highlights a key difference in their character. Dudley, who has two bedrooms and an excessive amount of toys, is associated with greed. Harry, on the other hand, has a tiny space that can barely be called a bedroom and very few possessions, gesturing to the humility that will become so key to his character.



The more Harry wants to communicate with whoever is sending the letters, the more Vernon tries to stop it. Like so many of the Dursleys’ decisions, attempting to fit Harry into their normal lives only serves to abuse him even further and make him feel cut off from the rest of the world.



The letter delivery methods also grow more and more outlandish and odd, only infuriating Vernon even more because it starts to reveal the magical world from which they are being sent.



Vernon, Petunia, Harry, and Dudley arrive at a gloomy hotel outside of a big city, but the next morning, a hundred letters arrive at the hotel for Harry. They set out again. In the midst of this, Harry realizes that the next day is his eleventh birthday. His birthdays have never exactly been fun—last year, the Dursleys gave him a coat hanger and a pair of Vernon’s old socks. Eventually, Vernon finds a “miserable little shack” on a rock in the middle of the stormy ocean. The inside of the shack reeks of seaweed, and the wind whistles through the walls.

Harry’s memories of his last birthday makes the contrast between how the Dursleys treat Harry and how they treat Dudley all the more glaring. While Dudley gets massive amounts of presents and celebration, Harry barely gets gifts and even forgets that his own birthday is approaching. This time around, the Dursleys are actively trying to make Harry more miserable by preventing him from being contacted by other people.



Vernon is delighted, even as the storm grows stronger, thinking no one can deliver mail to this house in the middle of a storm. Vernon and Petunia claim the single bed in the shack, Petunia makes Dudley a bed on the sofa, and Harry curls up on the floor under the thinnest blanket. He watches Dudley’s wristwatch as his birthday ticks nearer. When midnight arrives, Harry hears the whole shack shake and someone outside, knocking to be let in.

Harry hits perhaps his lowest here, forced to sleep on the floor in the middle of a freezing shack on a rock in the middle of an ocean on his birthday—the culmination of the idea that the Dursleys would rather maintain the appearance of a normal life than show even the smallest form of love towards their nephew.



CHAPTER 4: THE KEEPER OF THE KEYS

The knocking continues, and Vernon grabs the rifle that he picked up on the way to the shack. Suddenly, a giant man with bushy black hair (later revealed as Hagrid) smashes through the door to the shack. The wild-looking man greets Harry warmly, saying that he hasn’t seen Harry since he was a baby. Vernon points the gun at Hagrid and demands that he leave, but Hagrid simply grabs the gun and bends it effortlessly into a knot before tossing it away. Hagrid then gives Harry a birthday present: a large chocolate cake.

Hagrid’s arrival initiates an enormous shift in Harry’s life. Not only does Hagrid go on to reveal Harry’s magical abilities, but more than that, he cares deeply about Harry, and this birthday cake provides Harry with the first real sense of love he’s ever had. This highlights once again how, because Harry’s family does not provide him with love, he is forced to look for it in other places.



Harry is stunned, and asks Hagrid who he is. Hagrid introduces himself as the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts. When Harry still doesn’t fully understand, Hagrid explains again that he works at Hogwarts, assuming that Harry knows about Hogwarts; Harry says that he doesn’t. Hagrid continues to question Harry, asking if he knows where his parents “learned it all.” Harry is still confused, making Hagrid even angrier. Hagrid then turns to the Dursleys and thunders at them, shocked that they haven’t told Harry *anything* about who he is or about his parents. Hagrid turns swiftly back to Harry and reveals to the young boy that he is a wizard.

Hagrid’s big revelation allows Harry to be initiated into the magical world, from which Vernon and Petunia had been trying desperately to keep him away from. Hagrid represents the possibility of finding a place in the world where Harry feels he truly belongs—and magic parallels the excitement that Harry feels in trying to find that place.



Hagrid pulls out a letter, which Harry finally reads: it is an invitation to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry’s head explodes with questions. Hagrid then pulls out an owl from one of his giant pockets and writes a note to Dumbledore, saying that he has given Harry his letter and is taking him to buy his school supplies the following day. The owl takes the note and flies off.

Like many other coming-of-age stories, Harry is soon to attend a new school and find a place where he belongs. Although Harry’s development has a unique facet to it because of his magical abilities, the sense of coming into one’s own is a universal subject.



When Hagrid has finished, Vernon announces that Harry is not going to Hogwarts. Hagrid says that a Muggle is not going to stop Harry, quickly explaining to Harry that Muggle means non-magic people. Vernon says that when they took Harry in, they resolved to “put a stop to that rubbish.” Harry is appalled that they knew he was a wizard all along.

Petunia flies into a rage, saying that Lily had been a “freak.” She explains after Lily met James and they had baby Harry, Petunia knew that he would be just as “abnormal.” And then, she goes on, the Potters “got themselves blown up,” and the Dursleys got stuck with Harry. Harry is hurt by this, saying they told him his parents had died in a car crash. When Harry says this, Hagrid becomes enraged anew—furious that every child in the magical world knows Harry’s name, and yet he doesn’t even know his own story.

Harry presses Hagrid to tell him what actually happened to his parents. Reluctantly, Hagrid explains that several years ago, there was a wizard who went “as bad as you could go.” Hagrid has a hard time saying the wizard’s name, but eventually musters up the courage to say it: Voldemort. Twenty years ago, Hagrid explains, Voldemort started looking for followers, and was able to gain a lot of power. Some people tried to stand up to him, but he would kill those who tried.

Hagrid goes on to say that one day, when Harry was just a year old, You-Know-Who went to Harry’s home—maybe because he thought he could persuade Lily and James to join him, or perhaps he just wanted them out of the way. You-Know-Who killed them, and tried to kill Harry as well, but for some reason he couldn’t do it. That’s how Harry got his scar, and that’s why Harry is famous. No one had ever survived Voldemort’s killing curse before.

Vernon counters, saying that while yes, there might be something strange about Harry, a good beating could cure him. As for Lily and James, he says, they were “weirdos,” and the world is better off without them. He also says he always knew they’d come to a bad end. At this, Hagrid pulls out a pink umbrella and points it at Vernon, who immediately cowers.

While the Dursleys imply that wizards are the strange ones and don’t fit into the normal world, wizards likewise believe that Muggles are very strange, out of the norm, and separate from the wizarding world.



In reveal that Harry is a wizard, Hagrid allows Harry to understand more of his backstory, which ultimately gives him a stronger sense of identity. On the other hand, Petunia continues to emphasize Harry’s otherness by using words like “freak” and “abnormal,” which separate him from the norms in their lives.



The explanation of Voldemort’s backstory immediately associates the pursuit of power with evil, as Voldemort tries to acquire power and followers, while also killing anyone who stands in his path.



At the end of the novel, Dumbledore reveals the reason that Harry was able to survive the curse: love. The love from Harry’s parents, and particularly the sacrifice of his mother, gives him life-saving protection.



Vernon’s unfeeling and abrasive statements, especially in light of this tragic new information about Lily and James, demonstrate the contrast in how different families can act; while Harry’s parents loved him so much that they sacrificed themselves for him, the Dursleys make Harry feel extremely unloved and abused.



Harry asks Hagrid what happened to You-Know-Who. Hagrid says that he vanished the night he tried to kill Harry, and no one knows where he went. Most people think he's still out there somewhere but has lost his power. Regardless, something about Harry stopped him. Harry feels confused, worrying that there must be some mistake. But when Hagrid asks him if he's ever made anything happen when he was scared or angry, Harry starts to look at some of the odd things that had happened to him in a new light.

Hagrid beams at Harry, saying that he'll be famous at Hogwarts, and that he'll finally be with people like him, learning from the best headmaster Hogwarts has had: Albus Dumbledore. Vernon again says that Harry will not be attending, arguing that he won't pay for some "crackpot old fool to teach him magic tricks." At this, Hagrid whips out his umbrella. A flash of violet light erupts, and Dudley grows a pig's tail, poking through his trousers. Vernon, Petunia, and Dudley quickly flee into the other room in fear.

As Harry and Hagrid get ready to leave, Hagrid asks Harry not to mention this pig-tail incident—he's not usually supposed to do magic. He was expelled from Hogwarts in his third year, he explains, but doesn't say anything else about it. Instead, he throws Harry his large coat and says that they should get some sleep, because tomorrow they have to leave early to buy all of Harry's books and supplies.

CHAPTER 5: DIAGON ALLEY

Harry wakes the next morning thinking that he dreamed the whole episode—until he sees Hagrid next to him in the shack. Hagrid tells Harry they'd better depart for London, where they'll buy his school supplies. As they row back to shore, Harry says that he's worried about affording his tuition and supplies because Vernon won't pay for it. Hagrid tells Harry that his parents left him money in Gringotts, the wizarding bank run by Goblins. Hagrid mentions the bank is impossible to rob because there are spells and dragons guarding the vaults. Plus, the bank extends hundreds of miles, and thieves often get lost.

As the boat magically propels itself to shore, Hagrid reads the *Daily Prophet*, the wizarding newspaper. Hagrid then explains the Ministry of Magic to Harry, whose main job is to keep magic a secret from the Muggles, otherwise everyone would want magic solutions to their problems. The boat arrives on the shore, and they walk through the town to the train station. Passersby stare at Hagrid, as he comments loudly on "ordinary" things like parking meters. When Harry turns the conversation back to Gringotts and dragons, Hagrid comments tenderly that he's always wanted a dragon.

Harry starts to contextualize some of the incidents recounted in the earlier chapters. Rather than these being strange occurrences, Harry now understands that they were simply expressions of his identity. And now, thanks to Hagrid, he is able to understand that identity and feel less abnormal.



In a short period of time, Hagrid quickly becomes a kind of father figure to Harry. He is proud of Harry, excited for the journey on which he is about to embark, and also fiercely protective of him. This love is exactly what Harry had been lacking from the Dursleys, and why both Hagrid and his friends at Hogwarts become so important to him.



Hagrid's explanation affirms that magic automatically comes with a degree of power, like causing someone to grow a pig's tail. The fact that Hogwarts can expel people for its misuse hints at how wizards (like Voldemort) can use it to do a great deal of harm, and therefore one has to be cautious when wielding that kind of power.



This chapter marks Harry's real initiation into the magical world and its customs, as Hagrid explains some of the most basic aspects of Hogwarts and the wizarding world more generally. This begins to transform the world from something completely alien to Harry into something that he feels like he is a part of—although he continues to have doubts throughout the chapter.



In the early chapters, Harry and the reader learn about magic and the wizarding world alongside each other. Thus, while Harry is beginning to enjoy a sense of belonging, readers are able to start to grasp the magic and mystery of the story as well.



Harry and Hagrid take a train to London, and Harry reviews the list of things he has to buy, including black robes, a pointed black hat, spell books, a wand, and a cauldron. In London, Harry follows Hagrid through the streets. He looks for a place that might look like a wizard shop, but can't imagine where they might be going. Hagrid finds a "tiny, grubby-looking pub" called the Leaky Cauldron, and Harry notices that most people walking by don't even glance at it. He gets the feeling that those people actually *can't* see it.

When Harry and Hagrid enter the pub, people greet Hagrid warmly. When they get a closer look at Harry, they quickly realize who he is. The bartender shakes Harry's hand, saying "Welcome back, Mr. Potter." Others tell him that they can't believe they're meeting him and that they have always wanted to shake his hand. Harry doesn't know what to say. Hagrid then notices Professor Quirrell, the Defense against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. He is very pale, has a noticeable stutter, and says that he's very pleased to meet Harry.

Hagrid takes Harry out into the alley, where he taps a particular brick in the wall three times. The bricks pull away to form an archway, leading them to a large bustling street. Harry is in awe, wanting to take in everything: the shops selling owls, cauldrons, and dragon liver; boys marveling over new broomsticks; people buying robes and telescopes; windows containing bat spleens and eel eyes.

Harry and Hagrid then reach Gringotts. The first words engraved upon the doors read "Enter, stranger, but take heed / Of what awaits the sin of greed." Goblins staff the bank; they are short, with pointed beards and very long fingers and feet. Hagrid tells a goblin that they are going to take some money from Harry's safe, handing him a key. Hagrid adds that he has a letter from Dumbledore about the "You-Know-What" in vault 713. Harry asks what it is, but Hagrid only says it's secret business for Hogwarts.

A goblin named Griphook takes Harry and Hagrid on a cart through "a maze of twisting passages." They arrive at Harry's vault; inside are mounds of gold, silver, and bronze coins. Harry marvels, knowing that there is no way the Dursleys know about it or they would have stolen it all from him. Hagrid helps pile a heap of coins into a bag to get Harry through a few terms.

Rowling's description of where to find the Leaky Cauldron introduces another key idea about the wizarding world: it has always been there, if one has the knowledge to find it. This can be interpreted more broadly to apply to anyone who feels different: that they can find the place where they belong, as long as they know where to look.



This is the first moment in which Harry gets a real taste of his fame. But as a testament to Harry's humility, he does not let the fame go to his head. Instead, he graciously shakes their hands and greets them, but is uncomfortable. As per Dumbledore's wish, Harry is able to retain his humility because he grew up away from this fame.



Harry's entrance into Diagon Alley signals his entrance into a new world. As he stares in wonder over all of the shops, people, and goods, Rowling conveys the way in which a child's discovery of the place where he or she truly belongs can be quite literally magical.



Gringotts' doors are engraved with a warning for thieves, outlining the negative consequences for "the sin of greed," once again associating greed with evil.



Harry's vault demonstrates another reflection of Harry's parents care for him. They leave him their fortune and hide it from the Dursleys (or perhaps Dumbledore does), knowing that if the Dursleys found out, they would greedily take advantage of Harry.



Next, Harry and Hagrid go even deeper into the bank, until they reach vault 713. The vault has no keyhole; the goblin simply runs a finger across the door and it melts away. The goblin explains that if anyone else tried that, they'd be sucked through the door and trapped. Inside is simply a "grubby little package." Hagrid tucks it into his coat, and they set off for the ground level.

Next, Hagrid takes Harry to Madam Malkin's to buy robes. Hagrid feels a little motion sick following the cart ride and so excuses himself back to the Leaky Cauldron, leaving Harry alone. Inside, Madame Malkin starts to fit him for robes next to another boy (later revealed as Draco Malfoy). The boy says his father is buying his books, and his mother is buying his wand. Then he's going to go buy a racing broom, saying that he wants to try and smuggle one into school and complaining that first years can't have their own. Harry is strongly reminded of Dudley.

Draco asks if Harry has a broom, or if he plays Quidditch. Harry says no, wondering what Quidditch could possibly be. Draco then asks if Harry knows what House he'll be in. Harry says no, feeling "more stupid by the minute." Draco says he thinks he'll be in Slytherin, as his whole family has been. Draco then notices Hagrid out the window, and Harry tells him who he is, pleased to know something Draco doesn't. Draco says that he's heard of Hagrid—that he's the "servant at Hogwarts." He goes on to say that he's heard Hagrid is kind of "savage." Harry counters, saying he thinks Hagrid is "brilliant."

Draco then asks Harry where his parents are; Harry says shortly that they're dead. Draco asks Harry whether they were "our kind," and Harry replies yes, they were a witch and wizard. Draco says that he doesn't think that they should let "the other sort in," because they aren't brought up the same way. They haven't even heard of Hogwarts before getting their letter, Draco says. Draco asks Harry his name, but before he can respond, Madam Malkin says that Harry is finished.

Harry leaps up, eager to escape the conversation. Outside, he tells Hagrid about what Draco said—that people from Muggle families shouldn't be allowed at Hogwarts. Hagrid assures Harry that he's not from a Muggle family, but even if he were, some of the best witches and wizards had Muggle parents—like Lily.

The fact that this vault is more heavily guarded imbues the mysterious object with a sense of power, which is juxtaposed by the unassuming appearance of the package. The extra security measures also demonstrate that some wizards might bear a great deal of greed or desire for that power, as Voldemort and Quirrell later do.



Harry's comparison of Draco and Dudley is apt: both feel very comfortable in the world in which they belong, and both feel completely entitled. Like Dudley, Draco expects that his parents will do everything and buy everything for him, while Harry, who has always lived under the humblest of circumstances, has no such expectation, putting the two boys immediately at odds.



Although Harry starts to feel a semblance of a connection with the wizarding world, this conversation deals a serious blow to his confidence. In speaking with Draco, whose confidence is derived from his ego and family reputation, Harry again feels like he may not actually belong in this world. And in insulting Hagrid—the one person who has showed Harry any affection—Draco immediately makes an enemy of Harry.



The prejudice Draco exhibits here becomes a running theme across the seven books. But even though Harry does not belong to this Muggle-born class of wizards, he feels that he does relate to them in that he was raised by Muggles, again adding to his growing sense that he may not belong in the wizarding world, either.



Hagrid sustains the kind of fatherly role he's taken in Harry's life by offering him comfort and wisdom in the wake of Draco's words, and invoking his mother to do so. In addition, he affirms Harry's sense of belonging in his newfound world.



Harry asks Hagrid what Quidditch is, and Hagrid explains it's a wizard sport played on flying broomsticks with four balls. Harry then asks about Houses; Hagrid says there are four of them at Hogwarts, into which students are placed. He tells Harry that "there's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin," and that You-Know-Who was one of them.

Harry and Hagrid then go to buy his school books, and Harry has to be dragged away from a book that would allow him to curse Dudley. Hagrid tells Harry that he's not supposed to use magic in the Muggle world except under special circumstances—and anyway, that he would need to study a lot before he can use spells like that. They move on to buy supplies for Harry's Potions class at the Apothecary.

Hagrid then sets out to buy Harry a birthday present: a beautiful snowy owl. Finally, all Harry has left to buy is his wand. Harry visits Ollivander's wand shop, very excited to get a wand. Inside, Harry feels the very air "tingle with some secret magic." Ollivander greets Harry, immediately noticing that he has Lily's eyes—and that he still remembers when she was in his shop buying her first wand. Ollivander also notes Harry's scar, confessing with dismay that he made the wand that did it.

Ollivander gives Harry three wands to try, but takes each one back immediately. He then hands Harry a final wand. Harry feels a warmth in his fingers; when he swishes it in the air, a stream of red and gold sparks shoots from the end like fireworks. Ollivander cries "bravo!" but then realizes something "curious" about the wand. The phoenix whose tail feather is in Harry's wand gave only a single other feather—to the wand which gave Harry his scar. Ollivander comments that people should "expect great things" from Harry, because after all, You-Know-Who did "great things—terrible, yes, but great." Harry shivers. He nervously pays for the wand and leaves the shop.

In the late afternoon, Harry and Hagrid make their way back to the train station. They eat before Harry's train home, but Harry is very quiet. Harry has had the best birthday of his life, but he confesses to Hagrid what's worrying him: everyone thinks he's special, but he doesn't know anything about magic. Hagrid assures him that he'll learn quickly—"everyone starts at the beginning at Hogwarts"—and that he'll have a wonderful time. Hagrid gives Harry his ticket to Hogwarts, and sees him off on the train home.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Slytherin is linked to bad people in Rowling's world is because of its association with ambition. Ambition is in a sense a desire for power, which Rowling displays time and time again as something that can easily bleed into evil territory.



As Harry finds his way in this new magical world, he must also grapple with the newfound power that he has which allows him for the first time to have the upper hand over his cousin, and would enable him to get revenge. As Hagrid counsels, instead he must learn to use it justly.



Gaining a wand makes Harry most excited for several reasons: first, it literally enables him to practice magic and thus gives him a true sense of belonging in this new magical world; second, it also gives him a sense of power that he has never had; and third, it represents a connection to his parents.



Ollivander draws the first connection between Harry and Voldemort, a connection that will grow over the series as their fates become inextricably linked. Yet in this moment, readers are simply reminded that wands and magic can come not only with a sense of great excitement, but also a power that can quickly get out of hand if the one wielding it has bad intentions or is greedy for more power.



In contrast to Ollivander's warning, power is not what concerns Harry in this moment. In a testament to his humility, he worries about not living up to others' expectations and again is concerned that he may not truly belong with the other students in his class. And Hagrid, who has kindly taught Harry so much already, gives him a final friendly assurance that he will find his place at Hogwarts, just like anyone else.



CHAPTER 6: THE JOURNEY FROM PLATFORM NINE AND THREE-QUARTERS

Harry spends a final month with Vernon, Petunia, and Dudley. They no longer torment Harry, but they have also stopped acknowledging his existence altogether. Thus, Harry keeps primarily to his room, with his new owl keeping him company. He calls her Hedwig—a name he finds in one of his new books, *A History of Magic*. Harry's schoolbooks are very interesting, and he reads late into the night.

The day that Harry leaves for school, the Dursleys drive him to King's Cross station, where he is meant to take an eleven o'clock train from platform nine and three-quarters. Vernon dumps Harry's trunk on a cart and helps him roll it to the platforms. Vernon snickers, noting that there's no platform nine and three-quarters, and leaves laughing. Harry gets nervous; he stops a passing guard and tries to ask about the train to Hogwarts, but the guard doesn't know anything about it. Harry tries not to panic, but the train is leaving in ten minutes.

Just then Harry hears a woman talking about Muggles. He turns to find a plump, red-haired woman (Molly Weasley) talking to four boys and a small girl, all with equally red hair. He watches as the oldest boy in the group, Percy, marches towards the dividing barrier between platforms nine and ten and disappears. The next two boys, twins named Fred and George, follow the same path.

Harry approaches Molly, and she assumes that he must be a first year, like her youngest son Ron. She kindly teaches Harry how to get to the platform: walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten (and not to be afraid while doing so). He starts to run towards the barrier, closing his eyes as he nears it, awaiting a crash. But when he opens his eyes, a scarlet steam engine waits in front of him, packed with people: he has found the Hogwarts Express.

Harry pushes his cart past the first few train cars, already packed with students. He presses on until he finds an empty compartment near the end. He tries to push his cart onto the train, and Ron appears, offering to help him lift it onto the train (with some aid from Fred and George). When they get a closer look at Harry, they notice his scar, and realize who he is. Harry gets embarrassed and hastily boards the train.

Harry's relationship with the Dursleys has changed significantly. Now that he has his own world outside of theirs, he no longer feels so excluded. Instead, he devotes himself to learning as much as he can about his new world because it makes him feel like less of an outsider.



Even though Harry has found a new world, there are still barriers to his sense of belonging. Hagrid has clearly forgotten to tell Harry a key piece of information, and this plays into Harry's continued insecurity that he may not actually belong in his new world because he doesn't know all of the customs and traditions that it seems like many other wizards automatically know.



Despite the fact that Harry still feels like an outsider, the knowledge that he has gained from Hagrid allows him to spot other wizards like him.



It is important to note that the Weasleys enter Harry's life at a time of need. When Harry is feeling vulnerable, the Weasleys often resurface to give Harry an understanding of family that he has been missing up to this point. The Weasleys often give Harry a sense of support and protection, as Molly does here, essentially standing in for his own mother.



Harry's fame becomes more and more of a part of his life as he enters school and meets other students who know who he is. But, having grown up away from all of that, Harry again remains humble and actually grows embarrassed at the attention, hoping simply to fit in with his peers rather than to stand out.



Harry watches Fred, George, Ron, and Percy say goodbye to their mother, Molly. Percy says he can't stay long, as he's a prefect; Molly kisses him on the cheek goodbye. She warns Fred and George to behave themselves and to look after Ron. They then tell her with excitement that the boy they met on the platform is Harry Potter. The young girl, Ginny, asks to see him, but Molly says that he's not something to "goggle at in a zoo," and tells the boys not to ask any invasive questions. They all say a final goodbye and board the train.

The train pulls out of the station and Harry feels a "leap of excitement" about the future. Then, the youngest red-headed boy, Ron, enters the compartment, asking to sit with Harry because all of the other cars are full. Ron asks if he's really Harry Potter, and if he has the scar. When Harry shows him, Ron stares. Harry confesses that he can't remember anything about what happened, though.

Harry, in turn, asks Ron if all his family are wizards. When Ron says yes, Harry says he must know loads of magic. Harry wishes that he had three wizard brothers. Ron explains that he actually has five brothers, and they're a lot to live up to. Bill and Charlie, the two oldest boys, were head boy and captain of the Quidditch team, respectively. Percy's a prefect, and everyone likes Fred and George because they're funny.

Ron goes on to say that any of his accomplishments at school would be "no big deal" because his brothers did them first. Additionally, most of his things are hand-me-downs: he has Bill's old robes, Charlie's old wand, and Percy's old rat, Scabbers. Ron says that Percy got an owl for being made a prefect, and Ron starts to say that they couldn't afford one for him but stops himself.

Harry comforts Ron, saying that he had never had any money or gifts or clothes of his own until about a month ago. And he hadn't known anything about being a wizard or his parents or Voldemort. Ron gasps when he hears Harry use Voldemort's name. Harry simply says he didn't grow up knowing he shouldn't use it—he doesn't really know anything about wizard culture. Ron comforts Harry in turn, saying that there are lots of people from Muggle families and they learn quickly.

Again, in a moment of vulnerability for Harry, Molly puts Harry's feelings above all else as she attempts to protect his privacy. Her phrase "goggle at in a zoo" is also notable because it further connects Harry to the snake earlier in the novel, as he is someone who feels simultaneously isolated and observed by others like a spectacle or rarity.



Despite the fact that his journey has been rather fraught up to this point, Harry's excitement and hope for the future stems from the possibilities that lay ahead of him in the magical world, and the fact that he may no longer feel different from everyone else.



Harry's willingness to turn the conversation to Ron's family is a testament both to his humility (in wanting to steer the conversation away from himself), and to the fact that he continues to long for any kind of love that stems from familial bonds, which he has not gotten from the Dursleys.



Ron's anxiety about his own accomplishments in the face of his brothers' will later fuel what is revealed to be his deepest desire: to outshine all of them. But Ron doesn't seem to dwell on this wish nearly as much as Harry dwells on his own, and thus his is not treated as a dangerous desire.



Harry and Ron take an important first step toward friendship, as Rowling demonstrates the mutual comfort that friends can provide in the face of each other's insecurities—like Harry's worry over not knowing basic wizarding knowledge, and Ron's worry over his family's economic status.



A woman passes by with a cart, offering candy. The candies are all new to Harry, and so he buys a bit of everything. Ron declines, saying he has sandwiches. Harry offers to share his candy, happy to have something to share and someone to share it with. They start to open the Chocolate Frogs, which have collectible cards inside. Harry gets a card with Albus Dumbledore on it. The card says that Dumbledore is the Hogwarts headmaster, most notable for his defeat of the dark wizard Grindelwald and his work on alchemy with Nicolas Flamel, among other things.

As Harry and Ron eat more candy, a boy named Neville asks if they've seen a toad he's lost. When they say no, he leaves miserably. Ron turns back to look at Scabbers, confessing that having a rat isn't much better than having a toad. He raises his wand to show Harry a spell he learned to turn Scabbers yellow, when a girl with "a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth" (Hermione) knocks and asks if they've seen a lost toad.

When Hermione sees Ron about to do magic, she grows excited and asks to see it. Ron recites a quick rhyme and waves his wand, but nothing happens. Hermione wonders if it's a real spell, rattling on quickly that it's not a very good spell, that she's tried a few spells and they've all worked, that her whole family are Muggles, that she was very surprised to get her letter, and that she's memorized all of the course books. Ron and Harry are both stunned.

Ron and Harry introduce themselves, and Hermione is amazed to meet Harry (she's learned about him from a few books on modern magical history and the dark arts). She asks about what Houses they think they'll be in, saying she hopes she's in Gryffindor. She then leaves, saying she ought to go look for Neville's toad, and that they ought to change into their school robes because they've almost arrived at Hogwarts.

After Hermione leaves, Ron comments that he hopes he's not in whatever house she's in. Ron's whole family is in Gryffindor, and he is nervous that he might be put in another house. Harry, seeing how concerned Ron is, asks what his older brothers do. Ron replies that Charlie studies dragons, and Bill works in some capacity for Gringotts.

This sparks Ron's memory: someone just tried to rob a high security vault at Gringotts and didn't get caught. His dad says that it must have been a very powerful dark wizard. They don't think the person took anything, but everyone worries when things like this happen because they think You-Know-Who might be behind it.

Harry and Ron's friendship continues to bloom, as Harry is excited finally to have someone who wants to share his company. This relationship is very different from Harry's relationship with Hagrid. Though both friendships are valuable and both help Harry learn about the wizarding world, Ron's is particularly important because he and Harry are peers.



Both Neville's and Hermione's introductions are less than flattering, but in time both will become key friends for Harry. Hermione will eventually complete the trio, but initially her defining characteristics are being a know-it-all and dutifully following the rules.



While at first Harry and Ron are somewhat aggravated by Hermione's studiousness, ultimately her intelligence becomes a key factor in helping their trio of friends overcome a number of obstacles.



In addition to her intelligence, Hermione is deeply concerned with order and the rules. Eventually, however, she overcomes this concern, prioritizing their friendship and doing what is right over the obsessive need to obey every rule that Hogwarts lays down.



Harry is not the only one who suffers from a fear that he may not belong. Being placed into different Houses induces some anxiety for Ron, who hopes that he belongs with the rest of his family in Gryffindor.



Rowling begins to hint at the dark magic lurking at the edge of this book, and how it is fueled by the desire for greed and power.



A little while later, three boys enter Harry and Ron's compartment: Draco Malfoy, the boy from Madame Malkin's shop, and two mean-looking, "thickset" boys Draco introduces as Crabbe and Goyle, Draco asks if Harry is in fact *the* Harry Potter, before turning to Ron and saying there's no need to ask Ron's name—"all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford." Draco turns his attention to Harry and says that there are some wizarding families that are "better than others," and he can help Harry make the right friends, holding out his hand.

Harry refuses to shake Draco's hand, and Draco warns him to be more polite, or else he will "go the same way as [his] parents." Harry and Ron stand up, ready to fight. But before they can start to fight, Scabbers bites Goyle's finger. Goyle howls, throwing Scabbers off, and the three boys immediately disappear into the corridor. Hermione returns, wondering what's going on and saying that they are going to get in trouble before they even get there.

A short time later, the train arrives. Harry and Ron join the crowd on the platform, where Hagrid is calling for first years to follow him. He leads them down a "steep, narrow path" in the darkness of night. The narrow path leads to "the edge of a great black lake," and "perched atop a high mountain on the other side" is a "vast castle with many turrets and towers": Hogwarts. The students are in awe. They take boats to the other side, arriving at the front door of the castle. Once there, Hagrid finds Neville's toad in one of the boats, and Neville is overjoyed. Hagrid then knocks on the enormous oak door.

CHAPTER 7: THE SORTING HAT

The door opens, and Professor McGonagall leads the students through the enormous entrance hall lit with flaming torches. She welcomes the first years to Hogwarts, explaining that they will first be sorted into Houses. The four Houses are Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own history, as well as its own dormitory and common rooms. "Triumphs will earn [students] House points, while any rule-breaking will lose House points. At the end of the year, the House with the most points is awarded the House Cup."

Ron and Harry worry about how they sort the students into Houses, exactly—wondering whether they might have to take a test. Professor McGonagall then leads them into the Great Hall, the sight of which causes Harry to think that he "had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place." It is illuminated by thousands of floating candles; the tables are "laid with glittering golden plates and goblets"; and the ceiling is bewitched to look like the night sky.

Just as Harry is starting to make friends, he is also starting to make foes. Draco plays into Harry's insecurity and his desire to belong rather than to be different from those around him. Draco offers him friendship and an immediate gateway to that belonging. But it is also notable to see how Draco is a foil for Harry. While Harry is humble, Draco is all ego, which is one of the reasons why Draco repels rather than attracts Harry.



While Draco's offer is tempting, Harry is unfalteringly loyal to Ron, just as he was to Hagrid when Draco insulted him in Madame Malkin's shop. Thus, just as Harry feels protected by the friendship and love that others offer, he in turn tries to protect his own friends and gains a sense of bravery from them, courageously standing up to Draco here.



The first glimpse of Hogwarts inspires in Harry a great sense of excitement. As Harry will note many times over the novel, Hogwarts is magical because it is so unique. It is a school for those who are different, and that distinction is what makes Harry feel like he truly belongs there. It is also notable that the other students are just as excited by this glimpse of Hogwarts. None of them have been to the school before, and so, despite Harry's fears that he might be behind his classmates, in this regard he is just like everyone else.



The four "Houses" are aptly named because they represent an even closer-knit community than the Hogwarts community as a whole. The students in Harry's house—namely Ron and Hermione—literally become like his family, as they share classes and living spaces. Thus, Houses provide an opportunity to feel an even deeper sense of belonging for Harry.



Harry's first real experience of being inside Hogwarts reminds readers how magical it is to find a place where one feels at home. As Harry implies here, what makes Hogwarts "strange" is also what makes it "splendid," in contrast to the values that the Dursleys have tried to instill in him, which imply that strange is bad. Here, different becomes a positive value, and gains a magical quality.



McGonagall leads the students to the front of the hall and places a pointed wizard's hat on a stool that is very tattered and dirty. The hat begins to sing a song about how it sorts the students when it is placed on their heads: Gryffindor is for "the brave at heart"; Hufflepuff is for those who are "just and loyal"; Ravenclaw is for "those of wit and learning"; Slytherins is for "cunning folk" who use "any means to achieve their ends."

Ron is relieved that they won't have to do something like wrestle a troll, as Fred had told him, but Harry worries about having to be sorted in front of everyone. He doesn't feel brave or quick-witted at the moment. As the first years begin to be sorted and the older students applaud when new students are sorted into their own House, Harry worries that he might not be chosen for any of the Houses.

The students are sorted in alphabetical order. When it is Hermione's turn, she is placed into Gryffindor. Ron groans. Harry notes that sometimes the hat takes a while to choose a student's House, as when Neville is placed into Gryffindor after a long time; sometimes it takes very little time, as when Draco is sorted into Slytherin before the hat is even fully on his head.

At last, Harry is called, and his name sends whispers throughout the hall. The hat is placed on his head, and he can hear the sorting hat taking its time, murmuring that Harry is a difficult case. According to the hat, Harry has "plenty of courage," "not a bad mind," and "a nice thirst to prove [himself]." Harry thinks desperately, "Not Slytherin, not Slytherin." The hat questions whether Harry is certain, as Slytherin could "help [him] on the way to greatness." But acknowledging Harry's desire, the hat finally announces, "Gryffindor!" Harry is so happy to have been chosen for Gryffindor and not put in Slytherin that he barely notices that he is getting "the loudest cheer yet."

Only a few people are left. Ron is the second-to-last student, and he has turned "pale green" by the time he steps up to the hat. A second later, the hat proclaims "Gryffindor!" Ron is relieved; Harry cheers along with everyone else. Percy tells him, "Well done," as he takes his seat at the Gryffindor table.

Dumbledore then stands to say a brief welcome and a "few words" (literally, "Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!"), and then sits back down while the students enjoy the feast. The dishes in front of them are now heaped with delicious food. Harry, who has never been able to eat as much as he wanted, digs into "a bit of everything."

Rather than sort students arbitrarily, the hat ensures that students will share some qualities or values with the other students around them, providing them with an additional sense of belonging that stems from similar personalities.



Again, Harry's continued insecurity about not belonging or being too different bares itself here. Although Harry clearly has found a community, he is still concerned that he may be too different from the other students, and that he will not fit in with anyone else.



Ron's groaning at Hermione's placement acknowledges the fact that students are largely expected to become friends with students in their Houses. Unbeknownst to Ron, Hermione will in fact become a key friend to him.



Harry's thoughts as the Sorting Hat figures out where to put him are extremely revealing about his character. In requesting specifically not to be put into Slytherin, Harry actively works against any desire for greatness or power. His humility is further affirmed when he is so relieved to belong, that he doesn't even notice the adoration that the other students show towards him.



Just as Harry wants to belong in the magical world, so too does Ron wish to belong in the same community as his family, and so he is relieved to be sorted in the same House as his brothers and parents before him. It also gives him the opportunity to solidify his friendship with Harry, now that they are in the same House.



The opening magical feast that Hogwarts provides immediately gives Harry a much greater sense of belonging than the Dursleys ever did, as he is able to eat and drink as much as he wants.



Harry starts to get to know those around him. He has a polite conversation with a ghost, Nearly Headless Nick (who is so nicknamed because “someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly”). Another boy in Gryffindor, Seamus Finnigan, tells Harry that his dad is a Muggle and his mom is a witch. Neville says that his grandmother (a witch) raised him, but that they thought he was a Muggle until he was eight.

Harry looks up at the table where the teachers are. Hagrid is there; Professor McGonagall is talking to Professor Dumbledore. Professor Quirrell, whom Harry met in the Leaky Cauldron and who is now sporting a purple turban, is speaking to a professor with “greasy black hair, a hooked nose, and sallow skin,” named Professor Snape. Snape looks back at Harry, and a “sharp, hot pain” darts across Harry’s scar. The sensation disappears instantly, but Harry gets the sense that the teacher already doesn’t like him. Percy explains that Snape is the Potions teacher, but that he’s always been “after Quirrell’s job.”

After dessert, Dumbledore stands once again to address the room. He notes a bit of housekeeping: the forest on the grounds is forbidden to students; students should not use magic in the halls between classes; Quidditch trials will be held in the second week of the term; and “the third floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death.”

After a rousing rendition of the school song, the students head back to their houses. First year Gryffindors follow Percy up to the towers, and Harry is amazed to see people in the portraits whispering and pointing. Peeves the poltergeist makes trouble for them as they try to climb the marble staircases. Finally, they arrive at the portrait of a very fat woman in a pink dress. Percy gives her a password, and the portrait swings open. The students climb through it into the dormitories.

Percy directs the girls to their dormitory and the boys to another. At the top of a spiral staircase in one of the towers, they find their beds and their trunks waiting for them. They change into their pajamas and climb into bed. That night, Harry has a bizarre dream: “He was wearing Professor Quirrell’s turban, which kept talking to him, telling him he must transfer to Slytherin.” In his dream, Harry “tried to pull it off but it tightened painfully.” Malfoy was there, too, watching him struggle and laughing, and then Malfoy morphs into Snape. Then “there was a burst of green light and Harry [wakes], sweating and shaking.” By morning, he’s forgotten all about the dream.

Not only does being in Gryffindor allow Harry to solidify his friendship with Ron, it provides him with other new friendships. And in hearing from Seamus and Neville, Harry sees that many of his peers have had different experiences growing up, not just him.



Snape’s dislike of Harry is due to a complicated backstory that will be revealed slowly over all seven novels, but the reason that Dumbledore gives at the end of this book is because of Snape’s dislike of Harry’s father, James. This antagonism is due largely to the fact that he considers James very arrogant, and assumes that Harry will be the same way, given his status as “the boy who lived”—even though Harry’s defining trait is really humility.



Dumbledore establishes early on that Hogwarts is a place of strict rules, which, due to the magical nature of the place, can sometimes have very serious consequences. But these rules really lay the groundwork for the fact that Harry, Ron, and Hermione will break nearly all of them when they feel it is necessary to do so.



Like the brick alley behind the Leaky Cauldron, or the barrier to platform nine and three-quarters, the portrait of the fat lady is another magical portal. In each instance, such portals separate those who have that special knowledge from those who do not, and Harry, for the first time, is privy to those secrets and therefore a sense of belonging.



Even safe in bed after his first day, Harry is still concerned with fitting into this new world. Harry’s dream represents a culmination of all of the things that could possibly spoil his sense of security: being placed in Slytherin away from his new friend, Quirrell’s turban (which takes on great significance near the end of the novel), Malfoy, who makes him feel as though he doesn’t belong, and Snape, who will soon do the same. It also groups those characters who feel most associated with power and greed, clearly demarcating them as evil in Harry’s mind.



CHAPTER 8: THE POTIONS MASTER

Students continue to whisper in Harry's wake as he walks the halls and tries to find his classes, which is made more difficult by the fact that the staircases constantly move, and that Peeves often points him in the wrong direction. Worse than Peeves is the caretaker, Argus Filch, and his cat, Mrs. Norris, who patrol the halls looking for troublemakers and rarely believe that students are lost if they happen to come upon an out-of-bounds corridor.

The classes are just as difficult as trying to actually locate them. Harry studies planetary movements, Herbology, History of Magic, Charms, and Transfiguration. The latter is taught by Professor McGonagall, who is a very strict teacher. The first day, the students try to turn a match into a needle, but by the end of the lesson, only Hermione has made the smallest amount of difference, turning it silver and pointy.

Harry looks forward to Quirrell's class, but it turns out to be a bit of a joke. His room smells strongly of garlic, which everyone thinks is to ward off vampires. They notice, also, that Quirrell's turban smells somewhat funny as well. Regardless, Harry is happy to find that he isn't miles behind everyone else in his classes. Lots of people came from Muggle families, like Harry, and even Ron didn't have much of a head start.

At the end of their first week, Harry and Ron eat breakfast before their first potions lesson with the Slytherins. Snape, who is the Head of Slytherin House, is infamous for favoring the Slytherins. Harry wishes that McGonagall (Head of Gryffindor) favored her House. Just then, the mail arrives, brought in by hundreds of owls. Harry receives a note from Hagrid, inviting him to tea that afternoon. Harry sends a note with Hedwig accepting the invitation.

Potions class is in the dungeon. When Snape goes through the roll call, he pauses at Harry's name, snidely commenting, "our new—celebrity." Snape then starts his lecture, saying that potions can teach the students to "bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death"—as long as they aren't "dunderheads." The students are deathly quiet, following Snape's every word.

Perhaps part of the reason that Harry eventually feels so justified breaking the rules is that the primary enforcers of those rules (like Filch and Mrs. Norris) are so strict as to be unreasonable. Therefore, Harry and others start to feel justified in their rule-breaking because they understand that sometimes they're not truly doing anything wrong.



Hermione's intelligence and overachieving personality will eventually become a key part of her friendship with Harry and Ron, as it allows them to overcome challenges that they would not be able to tackle without her.



As Harry starts to understand magic and realize how much there is to learn for all of the first years, magic transforms from a thing that helps Harry find a sense of belonging, into something that helps him come into his own. Harry has less anxiety about being different, but now he needs magic in order to grow up and become the wizard he is meant to be.



Even now that Harry has found a good set of friends in Ron and the rest of the Gryffindors, he still derives a great sense of comfort and love from his formative friendship with Hagrid. His visit to tea will help Harry again express some of his insecurities about classes and Professor Snape.



Snape's scathing dislike of Harry is related to his dislike of Harry's father, James, whom he believed to be very arrogant. Thus, Snape assumes Harry to be arrogant as well, hence his comment about Harry being "our new—celebrity." In reality, Harry is genuinely humble and wants to prove that he is not simply a famous name.



Snape suddenly calls on Harry, asking if he knows what “powdered root of asphodel” and “infusion of wormwood” make together. Harry doesn’t know, but Hermione’s hand shoots up. “Fame clearly isn’t everything,” Snape quips. He ignores Hermione and asks Harry two more difficult potions questions. Harry again says he doesn’t know, but hold Snape’s gaze and notes that Hermione clearly does, so Snape should ask her instead. Snape is not pleased; he gives the answers to his questions and takes a point from Gryffindor for Harry’s “cheek.”

Snape then pairs up the students and sets them to mixing up a simple potion. He criticizes everyone except Malfoy. Neville makes a mistake, melting Seamus’s cauldron into a blob, and bright red boils spring up all over his body. Snape calls Neville an idiot and sends him to the hospital wing, then turns on Harry and asks why he didn’t stop Neville from doing the wrong thing. Snape surmises that Harry thought Neville’s misstep would make Harry himself look good. Snape takes another point from Gryffindor. Harry tries to protest, but Ron tells him not to push it.

After the lesson, Harry’s spirits are low. But afterward he and Ron make their way to Hagrid’s wooden house at the edge of the forest. Hagrid welcomes them and Harry introduces him to Ron. They tell Hagrid over tea all about their first week of lessons—particularly Snape’s lesson. Harry worries that Snape seemed to hate him in particular. Hagrid says that that’s rubbish, but Harry can’t help but think that Hagrid can’t look him in the eye as he says this.

Hagrid and Ron start to talk about Charlie’s work with dragons, as Hagrid liked Charlie when he was a student. While they talk, Harry’s eye is caught by a newspaper clipping. It is about the break-in at Gringotts, which Harry sees to his surprise had occurred on his birthday. He reads more: nothing was taken, and the vault that was infiltrated had been emptied that same day. He remarks on this to Hagrid, saying it must have happened while they were there. Hagrid doesn’t meet Harry’s eyes or respond.

As Harry and Ron head back to the castle for dinner, Harry thinks again about what he had read, wondering whether the grubby little package that Hagrid had removed from vault 713 could possibly be what the thief had been looking for. If so, he thinks, had Hagrid collected it just in time? Where is it now? And why was Hagrid so evasive about Snape?

Snape affirms his assumption that he believes Harry will be arrogant in trying to humiliate Harry. But Harry is used to being humiliated and does not shy away from a challenge; in telling Snape that Hermione knows the answers, Harry simultaneously points out Snape’s unjust treatment of him and demonstrates that he’s not afraid to rebel when he knows that things are unfair.



Harry’s dislike of Snape stems from Snape’s bad temperament, but particularly his abuse of power. Harry understands that Snape is picking on him unfairly because he derives pleasure from taking Harry down a peg and simply because he is able to exercise that power.



Hagrid continues to provide Harry with a deep sense of love as he continues to represent a kind of father figure for Harry. Harry relies on him to be a source of advice and comfort as he deals with new and different challenges from his classes.



The Gringotts’ break-in and article sets off a mystery that Harry will work to solve through the rest of the book as he comes to believe that the package Hagrid picked up is what the thief was after. This leads Harry to try to make sure it doesn’t get into evil, greedy hands (and causes him to break more than a few rules in the process).



Harry’s immediate dislike of Snape begins to blind him in some respects: throughout the rest of the book Harry will be so consumed with the desire to work out the mystery and to prove that Snape is a villain that he will ignore all signs that this is not the case.



CHAPTER 9: THE MIDNIGHT DUEL

The next week, the Gryffindors begin flying lessons. Harry had been looking forward to learning to fly more than anything else, but he is frustrated that they will be learning with the Slytherins. He isn't keen on making a fool of himself in front of Malfoy, who often talks boastfully about his Quidditch skills and complains loudly about first years never making the House teams.

Seamus and Ron are also excited for flying lessons, but Neville is nervous about it. Hermione, too, is uneasy, as flying isn't something she can learn from a textbook. At breakfast the morning of the lesson, Neville receives a present from his grandmother in the mail: a Remembrall, which is a small glass ball full of smoke that turns red if the person holding it has forgotten something. Just then, Malfoy comes over and snatches it from Neville, but McGonagall sees this interaction and makes him return it.

That afternoon, Madam Hooch leads their flying lesson. She tells each student to stand by a broom on the ground, stick out their hand, and say, "UP!" Harry's broom effortlessly jumps into his hand. Just as the students start to mount their brooms, Neville pushes off a little too quickly, and he rises twenty feet before tumbling to the ground and breaking his wrist. Madam Hooch takes him to the hospital wing, warning the students not to try any flying while she is gone or they will be expelled.

As soon as Neville and Madam Hooch leave, Malfoy begins to make fun of Neville. He then spots Neville's Remembrall on the ground and picks it up. Harry tells Malfoy to return it; instead, Malfoy gets on his broomstick and takes off, taunting Harry to "come and get it." Harry grabs his broom, but Hermione stops him, warning that he'll get in trouble.

Harry ignores Hermione's warning. He takes off and glides easily through the air, delighted that he's found something he's naturally good at. He hears gasps of admiration behind him as he faces Malfoy, threatening to knock him off his broom if he doesn't hand over the Remembrall. Malfoy throws the Remembrall high into the air and challenges Harry to catch it. Harry dives instinctively for the ball, catching it just in time before landing on the ground.

In contrast with the love and protection that Harry feels from friends like Ron, Malfoy's and Harry's rivalry continues to make Harry feel vulnerable, dampening his excitement about learning to fly. Malfoy's ego is also once again on display in contrast with Harry's humility.



Malfoy's interaction with Neville sets the groundwork for the later episode during the flying lesson. Malfoy continues to pick on those weaker than he is, and this sparks Harry's desire to do what is right, to protect his friend, and to stand up for those who have less power than others.



Harry's facility with the broom and with flying is foreshadowed here, in that it immediately jumps into his hand, giving him an immediate sense that he is meant to fly. Madam Hooch also lays down a rule for the students, setting the stage for Harry to break it.



Harry leaps to break the rules not for the sake of breaking them, as Malfoy does, but instead to stand up for his friend. Even though Hermione warns him about the rules, Harry knows that he is trying to do what is right, and that sometimes breaking rules is warranted.



Flying is another dimension to magic that instills Harry with a sense of belonging. His natural talent demonstrates to him that he's meant to be at the school learning magic, quelling his previous anxieties about being behind all of his classmates in everything.



Just then, Professor McGonagall runs over, scolding Harry furiously and telling him to follow her. Harry worries that he's about to be expelled. She leads him back to the castle and outside a classroom, where she retrieves Oliver Wood from his Charms class. Professor McGonagall introduces Wood to Harry, excitedly telling Wood that she has found a "Seeker." Wood is delighted; McGonagall confirms that she's never seen anyone as naturally talented on a broomstick as Harry. McGonagall explains to Harry that Wood is captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

Professor McGonagall tells Wood that she'll ask Dumbledore to bend the rule saying that first years can't have their own broomsticks; she knows that they need a better team than the one they had last year. She concludes by telling Harry that she wants to hear that he's training hard, otherwise she may change her mind about not punishing him. But, she tells Harry, James would have been proud of him—he was an excellent Quidditch player, too.

At dinner, Harry tells Ron all about what happened, explaining that Wood told him he's the youngest House player in about a century. Harry starts training the following week, though the team wants to keep Harry's involvement a secret from everyone else. Fred and George come over and congratulate Harry—they're on the Quidditch team, too.

After Fred and George leave, Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle come up to Harry and ask when he's taking the train home, presuming that he's been expelled. Harry comments that Malfoy's a lot braver with Crabbe and Goyle next to him. Malfoy says that he can take Harry by himself, challenging him to a wizard's duel at midnight in the trophy room. Ron quickly accepts the challenge for Harry.

When the bullies leave, Ron explains to Harry that a wizard's duel is a magical duel, but that he and Malfoy don't know enough magic to do any real damage to one another. Hermione comes up to them, overhearing their conversation. She warns them not to wander the school at night, or they'll lose points for Gryffindor if they're caught. They tell her it's none of her business, though Harry does feel he's pushing his luck.

At first, McGonagall's reaction appears to be furious, and it seems that Harry is sure to be punished, if not expelled. But when her reaction turns around, Harry gets positive reinforcement rather than negative reinforcement for breaking the rules. Harry is once again rewarded for breaking the rules, when he is doing what he believes to be right.



Not only does McGonagall let Harry get away with breaking the rules, she even suggests "bending" another rule to allow him to be on the Quidditch team, a further reward for his rule-breaking tendencies. Additionally, Quidditch becomes even more important to Harry in this moment, because it provides him with a connection to his father that he had never had before.



Quidditch not only gives Harry a sense of belonging, as his exceptional talent is celebrated, but it also gives him a new set of friends on the Quidditch team.



Ron again shows the many layers of protection that friendship can afford. He not only accepts the duel so that Harry will not look foolish (knowing Harry doesn't know what a wizard's duel is) but also backs Harry up, in the same way that Crabbe and Goyle back up Malfoy.



Hermione continues to be the biggest proponent of the school's rules, but even Harry has his doubts about the duel—perhaps because he knows that in contrast to his earlier instance of rule-breaking, in this case, he isn't breaking the rules to do what's morally right.



That night, Ron and Harry leave for the duel just before midnight. When they reach the portrait hole, Hermione is there to stop them. As she warns them, they climb through the portrait, and she follows. When they insist on going, she turns back, but the pink lady has left her portrait, and Hermione can't get back into the dormitory. Hermione is frustrated that now she too can get into trouble. She says haughtily that she'll go with them, and tell Filch that she was trying to stop them if they are caught. They also find Neville sleeping on the ground in the hall because he couldn't remember the password to get back into the dorm. Left without any options, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville all go to the trophy room together.

When Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville arrive at the trophy room, Malfoy isn't there yet. Filch, on the other hand, is in the next room, searching for rule-breakers. Neville then crashes right into a suit of armor; Harry shouts to run, galloping down corridor after corridor. Then Peeves sees them and bellows that there are students out of bed. They hear Filch running as fast as he can towards Peeves' shouts. They run down to the end of the corridor, but they find only a locked door.

Hermione swiftly casts a spell to unlock the door. They all cram through the door, shutting it quickly behind them and putting their ears to the door to listen. They hear Filch in the corridor, but Peeves won't tell him where the students went. Filch walks away, "cursing in rage." Harry breathes a sigh of relief, but it is short lived. When he and the others turn around, they realize that they are in the forbidden corridor on the third floor. And now they know why it's forbidden there is a monstrous three-headed dog in the room.

The dog starts to growl menacingly, and Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville immediately fling themselves back out the door, flying down the hall once again until they reach the portrait of the Fat Lady, who has returned. They all scramble into the common room and collapse. Ron wonders aloud why they keep a thing like that in the school, and Hermione scoffs, pointing out that it was standing on a trapdoor—it's clearly guarding something. With a final quip that they could have been "killed—or worse, expelled," Hermione huffily goes to bed. Harry wonders about what the dog might be guarding, thinking it is perhaps the package from vault 713.

This episode lays the groundwork for Hermione's eventual friendship with Harry and Ron, though there are still a few key obstacles at this point. She is more concerned with breaking the rules than she is with making friends and protecting them, even though in this episode she does work to keep them out of trouble. But eventually, Hermione overcomes this strict aversion to breaking the rules when she realizes that sometimes it is necessary to do so.



It is also interesting to note Harry's behavior in this episode in contrast to his behavior in the Remembrall episode. There, he had no fear of the consequences of breaking rules as he acted, because he knew that he was justified. In this instance, however, he understands that he's not justified in his actions (he's not breaking the rules for the right reasons), and therefore he knows to some degree that punishment would be warranted or expected.



Here Hermione reveals why her friendship will ultimately be so crucial to the trio later on in the novel: her cleverness offers them a form of protection, as she is able to perform advanced magic that they are unable to. And inadvertently, this moment serves as a gateway to her breaking the rules, as she unlocks a room that they know they aren't supposed to be in.



Hermione's statement highlights the fallacies of those who follow the rules to the letter, as it causes Hermione to believe in this moment that being expelled (due to rule-breaking) is worse than being killed. Yet at the end of the novel, readers see the transformation she has undergone, breaking rules to in order to prevent many people from dying in the future.



CHAPTER 10: HALLOWEEN

By the next morning, Harry and Ron look back on the midnight outing with the dog as an “excellent adventure.” Harry also tells Ron about the package the dog might be guarding, although they’re not sure what could be inside it. Neville seems completely uninterested in what the dog could be guarding, and Hermione refuses to speak to Harry and Ron.

At breakfast, the owls flood the hall as usual, and a large, thin package is dropped in front of Harry. He opens the letter attached, which is from Professor McGonagall and says that he should not open the package at the table. It contains his new broomstick, and he is to meet Wood for practice that night at seven o’clock for his first training session.

When Malfoy sees the package, he says that Harry will be in big trouble, as first years aren’t allowed to have brooms. When Professor Flitwick passes by, Malfoy complains to him, but Flitwick says that Professor McGonagall told him about the special circumstances. Harry tries not to laugh at Malfoy’s horror, and Harry says that it’s actually thanks to Malfoy that he’s got the broom.

Harry and Ron return upstairs, and Hermione, who’s overheard their conversation, angrily quips, “I suppose you think that’s a reward for breaking rules?” Harry says that he thought she wasn’t speaking to them, and she marches away. When they get upstairs, Harry marvels over his new broom—a sleek, shiny Nimbus Two Thousand.

That evening, Harry heads to the Quidditch field. Before Wood arrives, Harry eagerly mounts his broom, and is amazed at the ease with which he can control it as he swoops in and out of the three gold hoops at the edge of the field. Wood appears and comments excitedly on Harry’s skill.

Wood then teaches Harry the basics of Quidditch. Three players (Chasers) from each team try to throw a ball (the Quaffle) through one of the three hoops, while another player (the Keeper) defends it. Each score earns ten points. Two other players (Beaters) use bats to try to defend their team from two heavy balls (Bludgers), which are enchanted to try and attack players. The last player (the Seeker, Harry’s position) searches for a tiny ball called the Golden Snitch. The first Seeker to catch the Snitch ends the match and earns 150 points. As they practice, Wood grows more and more impressed with Harry.

The incident with the three-headed dog becomes an adventure that solidifies Ron and Harry’s friendship even further, as they are able to face a challenge together and come out of it relatively unscathed.



The rewards for Harry’s rule-breaking at his first flying lesson continue, as McGonagall gives him a brand new, top of the line broomstick and breaks (or bends) the rules so that he can have it.



Although Harry is largely pure of heart, there are a few circumstances in which he falls victim to some of the traits of the novel’s typically “bad” characters. In this instance, Harry enjoys having power over Malfoy and in making him jealous with the broom, in contrast with the power Malfoy had the night before in apparently tipping off Filch in an attempt to get Harry in trouble.



The ironic part of Hermione’s statement is that the broom is exactly that—“a reward for breaking rules.” Hermione, who is still adamantly on the side of following the rules, can’t bear to see the boys get positive reinforcement for what she sees as dangerous troublemaking tendencies.



Flying is a realm in which Harry feels entirely at ease. For a boy who is learning how to belong in a completely new world, flying provides Harry with a natural comfort.



Quidditch adds another dimension to Harry’s realization that being different isn’t necessarily a bad thing. In the case of Quidditch, it actually makes Harry feel unique and talented. Being a Seeker is perhaps the most important position on the team, and it gives him the ability to be more than just a celebrity. During his Quidditch matches, Harry feels like he is fully taking his place in the world and living up to others’ expectations.



Harry grows very busy between school work and Quidditch practice, and he can hardly believe it when he realizes that two months have passed. “The castle [feels] more like home than Privet Drive ever had,” and Harry is more interested in his lessons, now that he has mastered the basics.

On Halloween morning, Professor Flitwick teaches the students how to make objects fly, beginning with feathers. Harry and Seamus are paired up, and so are Ron and Hermione. When Ron waves his wand around and says the spell, Hermione pretentiously corrects him and says that he’s doing it all wrong. She demonstrates how it should be done, making the feather hover. Flitwick commends her, but Ron’s mood worsens.

As Harry and Ron walk from the classroom, Ron says, “It’s no wonder no one can stand her,” referring to Hermione. Hermione, who has been walking behind them, pushes past them, starting to cry. Ron is uncomfortable, but stands by what he said, saying “she must’ve noticed she’s got no friends.” Hermione doesn’t show up for their next class, and in the afternoon Harry and Ron hear a rumor that she’s been crying in the girls’ bathroom all day.

At dinner, decorations and a feast are laid out for Halloween. But just as the banquet begins, Professor Quirrell sprints into the hall in terror, gasping that there’s a troll in the dungeon. Quirrell faints. Chaos breaks out, and Dumbledore instructs prefects to lead students back to their dormitories. Harry and Ron start to follow Percy, but realize that Hermione doesn’t know about the troll. They hurry off to the girls’ bathroom.

As Harry and Ron run to the bathroom, they see Snape heading to the third floor. But before they can figure out why, they see the troll at the end of the hall, peering into a door. It is twelve feet tall with a lumpy body and a small bald head, and it’s holding a massive wooden club. The troll enters the door, and Harry and Ron swiftly lock the door behind it. They are triumphant—until they realize that the doorway leads into the girls’ bathroom, where Hermione is hiding. They unlock the door and run inside.

Harry’s sense of belonging only increases as time goes on. It is also notable that the more magic he learns, the more he feels at home—again reinforcing the correlation between magic and Harry’s feeling that he is at home.



Despite the fact that Ron is aggravated by Hermione’s attempt to teach him the proper way to perform the spell, her instruction in this scene will come in handy for Ron later in the chapter.



Just as Harry needs love and friendship in order to feel protected, so too does Hermione—which is why Ron’s words cut so harshly. Hermione has yet to make the kind of deep friendship that Ron and Harry have, and as a result she feels vulnerable, unwanted, and unloved.



Just like with Neville’s Remembrall, Harry doesn’t hesitate to break the rules when he knows that what he’s doing is right. Knowing that Hermione is in danger (and knowing that to some degree Ron caused this), he ignores Dumbledore’s instructions and seeks her out.



Harry and Ron’s instinct to go after the troll, and to run inside the bathroom when they realize they’ve accidentally set the troll on Hermione, highlights their selfless nature. In the face of danger, they put others’ well-being in front of their own—a trait that they will carry with them throughout this book.



Hermione is pressed against a wall, the troll advancing on her. Ron hastily grabs a metal pipe and throws it at the troll; it roars and turns towards Ron. Harry then leaps up, grabbing the troll around its neck from behind, his wand going straight up one of the troll's nostrils. The troll flails in pain as Harry clings on for dear life. Ron then uses the levitation spell—this time correctly—lifting the troll's huge wooden club in the air and bringing it down onto the troll's head. The troll sways forward and falls with a giant splat.

A moment later, Professor McGonagall, Snape, and Quirrell dash into the bathroom. McGonagall is livid, demanding to know what Harry, Ron, and Hermione were thinking. Hermione lies and says that she went looking for the troll because she thought she could deal with it on her own, and Harry and Ron bravely came to save her. Harry and Ron are shocked that Hermione is lying to a teacher.

Professor McGonagall takes five points from Hermione for her “foolish” behavior and sends her back to her dorm. She then awards Harry and Ron five points each, but states that they were all very lucky. When Harry and Ron head back to their dorm, Ron acknowledges that it was nice of Hermione to get them out of trouble. When Harry and Ron see Hermione back in the common room, they all say a quick “thanks”—and from that moment on, the three are friends.

The defeat of the troll provides the first of many examples in which Harry, Ron, and Hermione are only able to overcome obstacles through their friendship because they work together. Harry tries to inhibit the troll's movement, while Ron uses Hermione's technique—which he previously balked at when she tried to teach him—to cast the levitation spell.



This moment represents a crucial turning point for Hermione. Realizing how much Ron and Harry risked in order to save her life, Hermione finally sees the value in breaking the rules when necessary—and proves it by doing so herself. Hermione could easily have told the teachers the truth, but she chooses to lie so that she will get in trouble rather than Harry and Ron, which is also a gesture of friendship.



Once again, Harry is rewarded for rule-breaking because he did the right thing. In a way, so is Hermione; even though she loses points for Gryffindor by lying to a teacher, she also gains Harry and Ron's friendship, which will prove invaluable to her in this book. The troll that they are able to overcome together creates a long-lasting bond and love between the three of them that becomes the central relationship throughout the rest of the series.



CHAPTER 11: QUIDDITCH

In November, Quidditch season begins. Harry's first Quidditch match is against Slytherin, and he's nervous that he has to prove his skill. He's grateful to Hermione for her help with his homework, seeing as he's spent so much time training lately. Hermione has become more relaxed about breaking rules: for instance, the day before Harry's first Quidditch match, Hermione, Ron, and Harry sit in the freezing courtyard during a break, and she conjures a fire to keep them warm.

Snape enters the yard, limping. Even though he doesn't see the fire, when he notices Harry's book *Quidditch Through the Ages*, he sneers that library books are not to be taken outside the school. He takes five points from Gryffindor for the offense and confiscates the book from Harry, who is fuming because he knows that Snape just made up that rule.

Harry continues to rely on his friends both for emotional and also practical support. His newfound friendship with Hermione is, again, based on the fact that she now understands Harry's belief that sometimes it can be okay to break the rules if they are being broken for a good reason, like keeping them warm.



Harry continues to think poorly of Snape because of his constant abuse of his power over Harry. In this instance, Snape goes so far as to make up a rule (and an arbitrary one, at that) just so that Harry will get into trouble.



That evening, Harry wants to get his book back from Snape, thinking that he has no reason to be afraid of the teacher. When he goes down to the staffroom to find Snape, he peers through the door and sees Filch bandaging Snape's bloody, mangled leg as they discuss the three-headed dog. Harry tries to close the door quietly, but Snape notices him and yells at him to get out.

Back in the common room, Harry relays what he saw to Ron and Hermione, concluding that Snape must have tried to steal whatever the three-headed dog was guarding on Halloween. Hermione argues that a teacher wouldn't try to steal something from Dumbledore, but Ron says he "wouldn't put anything past Snape." Harry goes to sleep wondering again what the dog might be guarding.

The next morning, Harry feels terrible—he didn't get much sleep, and he's not hungry at breakfast. By eleven o'clock, the whole school is at the Quidditch field. Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Seamus have painted a *Potter for President* banner to surprise Harry. In the locker room, Wood gives a short motivational speech and then the team walks onto the field, where Madam Hooch is refereeing. When Harry sees the banner, he feels a little bit braver.

The game begins in a swirl of balls, brooms, and bats. Gryffindor pulls ahead early, and Harry flies way above everyone else, looking for the Snitch. But partway through the game, Harry feels his broom lurch under him, "as though the broom [is] trying to buck him off." No one seems to have noticed it, until Hagrid, who is sitting with Ron and Hermione, points out that it seems like Harry's lost control of his broom.

Harry's broom starts to roll, causing Harry to dangle from it by one hand. The crowd gasps. Hermione grabs Hagrid's binoculars and looks at the crowd. She sees Snape, who has his eyes "fixed on Harry" and is muttering something under his breath. Thinking that Snape is jinxing the broom, Hermione races to the row of seats behind Snape, accidentally knocking over Professor Quirrell in the process. She crouches behind Snape and casts a spell to set his robes on fire, thus breaking his focus. In the air, Harry is able to clamber back onto his broom.

Harry speeds toward the ground and hits the field on all fours. His hand is clamped over his mouth as if he's going to throw up. He coughs, and the Snitch falls into his hand, ending the game in confusion. Gryffindor wins 170 points to 60—the Gryffindors cheer the results.

In addition to associating Snape with power, Harry also starts to associate Snape with greed. This episode brings Harry to the conclusion that Snape is trying to steal whatever had been in Gringotts, and whatever the dog is now guarding.



Even though Harry views Snape as greedy and power-hungry, in this passage Harry falls victim to a desire of his own; he wants desperately to prove that Snape is up to something bad and to be the hero that prevents Snape from stealing what the dog is guarding.



Friendship again becomes a crucial support system for Harry, as it allows him to muster up his courage for the match. This will be true throughout the rest of the book as well, as the friendship between the three protagonists helps Harry to be braver than he would be alone.



Harry's jinxed broom is perhaps Voldemort's first attempt at killing Harry, albeit indirectly. It seems that Voldemort believes that getting rid of Harry will prevent the same loss of power that Voldemort experienced when trying to kill Harry as a baby.



Hermione again proves how vital her friendship is, and how crucial it is sometimes to break the rules. She wants to protect Harry from the jinx, even going so far as to light a teacher's robes on fire in order to do so. This moment also carries a subtle but key detail, in that Hermione also knocks Professor Quirrell in the process of trying to stop Snape.



Harry's first Quidditch success may not go exactly as planned, but winning the game certainly helps him feel like he belongs both on the team and in Gryffindor, and helps to fuel his confidence in later games.



Later, Harry returns to Hagrid's hut with Ron and Hermione for tea. Ron explains that Snape was the one jinxing the broom, but Hagrid is unconvinced. Harry reveals that he found out Snape tried to get past the three-headed dog, and that Snape's trying to steal whatever it's guarding. Hagrid is shocked that they know about "Fluffy" and argues that Snape wouldn't try to steal what it's guarding. He concludes by saying that the kids shouldn't try to intervene, and that what the dog is guarding is strictly the business of Professor Dumbledore and Nicolas Flamel. The kids' ears perk up at this new piece of information, and Hagrid realizes that he's said too much.

Although dangerous desires will be explored more fully in the next chapter, Harry also exhibits a dangerous desire here. He wants desperately to prove that Snape is up to something, biased by his immediate dislike of the man, and this desire also biases Ron and Hermione.



CHAPTER 12: THE MIRROR OF ERISED

By mid-December, everyone is excited for the holidays so they can return home. Harry, however, will not be returning to Privet Drive; instead he will stay at Hogwarts for the holidays. Harry is excited, because Ron and his brothers George, Fred, and Percy are staying at school as well—their parents are going to Romania to visit Charlie for Christmas.

Harry doesn't want to return to Privet Drive for the holidays because Hogwarts feels much more like home than Privet Drive ever did; additionally, he is bound to have a much more loving and enjoyable Christmas with Ron and his brothers than he would with the Dursleys.



One day, as Harry, Ron, and Hermione return from a Potions lesson, Hagrid is bringing in an enormous tree to decorate the Great Hall, and Ron offers to help. Malfoy, who is also in the corridor, remarks that Ron must be vying for the gamekeeper job because Hagrid's hut is practically a palace compared to the Weasley's home. Ron lunges at Malfoy in anger but is caught by Snape, who deducts five points from Gryffindor for fighting. Harry and Ron are furious.

Harry's friendship with Ron essentially extends his rivalry with Draco to Ron as well, as Draco feels it necessary to make fun of Ron too. Despite these divisions, friendships remain crucial for Ron and Harry because they can show each other support and even find comfort in disliking the same people, like Draco and Snape.



Hagrid tells the kids to cheer up—it's the holidays after all. Hermione then reminds Harry and Ron that they should head to the library before lunch. They're trying to find out who Nicolas Flamel is, which makes Hagrid furious. The trouble is that they don't know where to look for Flamel—they can't find him in any of the modern history books, and Harry wants to try to look at the Restricted Section, but students need specially signed notes to access those books.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione are bound by their friendship but also now by this collective desire to find out who Flamel is. For each of them, it feeds into a deeper desire to prove themselves: for Harry to prove that he can be a hero and not just a famous name, for Ron to prove that he is just as impressive as his brothers, and for Hermione to prove her intelligence.



The next day, Hermione goes home for the holidays. Harry and Ron spend their days sitting by the fire in the Gryffindor common room, roasting foods, plotting ways to get Malfoy expelled, and playing wizard's chess. Wizard's chess is the same as Muggle chess, except that the figures are alive, and players must convince the figures to follow directions. Ron never has any trouble at this, as he plays with an old set that used to belong to his grandfather, but Harry's chessmen (which he borrowed) don't trust him at all.

Harry and Ron's time together during Christmas demonstrates how their friendship and love has progressed to the point where they spend all of their time together, enjoy the same activities, and also dislike the same things as well. Ron's prowess at chess also foreshadows his eventual success in another game of wizard's chess, albeit with much higher stakes.



On Christmas, Harry is amazed to find a small pile of packages at the foot of his bed—he hasn't been expecting any presents. The first is a wooden flute that Hagrid has whittled. The second is from Vernon and Petunia: fifty pence, which he promptly gives to Ron once he sees how excited Ron is by Muggle money. The third present is from Molly Weasley, who knit him a sweater and made him some fudge. The fourth is from Hermione: a large box of Chocolate Frogs.

Harry opens his last present, which contains a “shining, silvery cloth.” Ron is in awe: it's an [Invisibility Cloak](#), which he says is extremely rare. Harry throws on the Cloak, and his body disappears instantly. A note falls out, which reads: “Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well.” Since there is no signature, Harry wonders who could have sent it, and if it really belonged to James.

Harry has an enormous and joyous Christmas dinner, and returns to his dorm with several party favors, including a new wizard's chess set. Harry and the Weasley boys then have a snowball fight on the grounds, and later Harry breaks in his chess set by losing badly to Ron. At the end of the day, everyone climbs into bed, full and sleepy.

In bed, the [Invisibility Cloak](#) still nags at Harry, as well as the note: “Use it well.” He pulls out the Cloak and excitement floods through him, realizing that he can go anywhere undetected. He puts it on and makes his way toward the Restricted Section of the library, determined to discover who Nicolas Flamel is. The library is dark, and Harry doesn't know where to start. In the Restricted Section, he pulls out a large black and silver volume that catches his eye, but when he opens it, the book starts screaming.

Harry closes the book, but the wail continues. Panicking, Harry knocks over his lamp and flees. He passes Filch in the doorway, trying to be as quiet as possible under the [Cloak](#). Suddenly, he sees Snape come around the corner, saying that they can catch the intruder. Harry ducks into a nearby room so that Snape doesn't run into Harry's invisible body in the narrow hallway.

Harry's presents serve as a representation of how much he has gained from the wizarding world: not only a sense of belonging, but a set of friends who substitute as his family. To Harry, who has experienced very little love before coming to Hogwarts, the gesture of friendship in being given presents at all far exceeds the value of the presents themselves.



The Invisibility Cloak becomes a key piece of the rest of Harry's story in this novel. Not only does it connect him to his father, but it also enables his rule-breaking tendencies. It is revealed at the end of the novel that Dumbledore left him the Cloak; with that critical piece of information in mind, Dumbledore's counsel of “Use it well” reveals his support of rule-breaking when necessary.



Not only Ron but also the entire Weasley clan become a substitute family for Harry, as they accept him as one of their own and treat him as they would a brother.



Here, Harry's rule-breaking is partially fueled by doing what is right, as he wants to protect whatever Fluffy is guarding from Snape, who Harry thinks is genuinely evil. However, it's important that part of Harry's motivation stems from wanting to prove that Snape is up to something bad. Given that Harry and Snape hate each other so passionately, it seems that Harry wants to find Snape guilty of something out of revenge for the awful way Snape treats him.



Harry flees in a panic, which suggests that he knows his motivations for being out of bed and in the Restricted Section aren't purely good. Yet again, with the Cloak, he is granted a certain degree of freedom to do what he wants.



Inside the room, Harry discovers an enormous mirror (later revealed as [the Mirror of Erised](#)). Harry looks in the Mirror, and to his shock sees a crowd of people standing right behind him. But when he frantically turns around, the room behind him is empty. Harry looks again at the Mirror's reflection. The woman standing right behind him has eyes just like Harry's; the man standing next to her has glasses and untidy black hair. Harry realizes that these are his parents, Lily and James, and that the people around them are his extended family. They smile at him. Harry has "a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness."

Harry doesn't know how long he stands in front of [the Mirror](#), until a distant noise makes him realize he has to go back to bed. The next day, Harry tells Ron what happened, saying that he wants to go back and show Ron his family. Harry can't eat all day; he can't think of anything except seeing his parents—not even Flamel.

That night, Ron and Harry return to [the Mirror](#). Harry once again sees Lily and James. But Ron can't see anything, so Harry places him alone in front of the Mirror. However, Ron doesn't see Harry's family or his own family; instead, Ron sees an older version of himself as Head Boy and Captain of the Quidditch team, holding both the House Cup and the Quidditch Cup. Excitedly, Ron asks Harry if he thinks the Mirror shows the future. Harry says it can't, as all of his family members are dead.

Harry asks to have another look, but Ron wants to look a little longer. They start to push each other out of the way, but a noise in the corridor startles them. Ron throws the [Cloak](#) over them as Filch's cat, Mrs. Norris, enters. When she leaves, Ron pulls Harry out of the room and back to their dorm. The next day, Ron realizes that [the Mirror](#) is still plaguing Harry. Ron tells Harry he shouldn't go back that night, but Harry refuses to listen.

The third night Harry returns alone. Harry sits down in front of [the Mirror](#), knowing that nothing can prevent him from staying there all night with his family. Dumbledore appears quietly behind him, noting that Harry has discovered "the delights of the Mirror of Erised." Dumbledore explains that it shows "the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts." Dumbledore then warns Harry that the Mirror provides "neither knowledge or truth," and that people have "wasted away before it" and have "been driven mad" by what it shows.

The Mirror of Erised, as Dumbledore explains later in the chapter, shows the Harry's deepest desire—to be with his family. While this is a virtuous wish, and demonstrates the power of the love that a family can provide to a child who has never really had it, the chapter goes on to demonstrate how the desire for something unattainable can be dangerous and maddening.



The descriptions of Harry here (standing there for an uncertain amount of time, not eating, not thinking of anything else) immediately hint at how these desires can be dangerous, because they prevent Harry from being able to live in the present. It is clear that the Mirror is addictive and can be maddening.



Just as the Mirror shows Harry's deepest desire, it also shows Ron's deepest desire. The image of fame and success Ron sees suggests that he longs to stand out among his brothers, many of which are high achievers. For Ron, the Mirror gives him hope that what he sees might be attainable, but for Harry, what the Mirror shows is both enchanting and torturous because what it shows can never be reality.



The dangers of the Mirror show themselves more fully here. The vision of Harry's family isn't real, but the love that comes with Ron's friendship is. Unfortunately, the Mirror starts to drive a wedge between the friends, demonstrating how even a wholesome desire like Harry's can have unintended negative consequences.



Here, Dumbledore reveals the purpose of the Mirror to Harry. This passage makes it seem like Dumbledore actually wanted Harry to find the Mirror. In a way, this is Dumbledore's first test for Harry: to be humble and self-sacrificing enough to give up his "deepest, most desperate desire," in order to live for others.



Dumbledore tells Harry that [the Mirror](#) will be moved to a new home the next day, and asks that Harry not look for it again. Before Harry goes, he asks what Dumbledore sees in the Mirror. Dumbledore says that he sees himself “holding a pair of thick, woolen socks.” When Harry is back in bed, he realizes that Dumbledore might not have been telling the truth. However, he also realizes that it had been a very personal question.

The Mirror of Erised will resurface at the end of the novel, where Harry will overcome this personal desire and demonstrate a new desire: wanting to keep the Sorcerer’s Stone out of evil hands. Thus, Harry’s desire transforms from something dangerous and consuming to something useful and self-sacrificing.



CHAPTER 13: NICOLAS FLAMEL

Harry doesn’t search for [the Mirror of Erised](#) again, but he starts to have nightmares about “his parents disappearing in a flash of green light” and a strange evil laugh. Then, just before the start of term, Hermione returns. She can’t believe that Harry was out of bed three nights in a row and *still* didn’t find out who Flamel is. Harry, Ron, and Hermione return to scanning books during their breaks.

Harry attempts to push his desires away, but family is a large pull for him. Fortunately, Harry is provided with a different kind of love and support in Ron and Hermione, who try to redirect Harry back into something more pressing and productive.



Quidditch practice also starts up again, and the team is excited: if the Gryffindors win their next match against Hufflepuff, they’ll overtake Slytherin in the House Championship. Harry trains harder than ever, finding that he has fewer nightmares when he does. However, when Wood reveals during one training session that Snape is refereeing the upcoming match, Harry worries that Snape could try to kill him again.

Harry’s devotion to Quidditch, which gives him a sense of purpose and belonging, also helps alleviate Harry’s longing for his family and the nightmares that consume him as a result.



Later that afternoon, when Harry, Ron, and Hermione are in the common room, Neville returns with his legs invisibly bound together by a Leg-Locker Curse that Malfoy had set upon him. Hermione performs the counter-curse, and Ron tells Neville that he has to stand up to Malfoy, but Neville admits that he doesn’t feel “brave enough to be in Gryffindor.” Harry tries to comfort Neville, offering him a Chocolate Frog and saying that Neville is “worth twelve of Malfoy.”

Just as friends have helped Harry with his insecurities, Harry in turn provides support for Neville with his own insecurities: thinking that he’s not brave enough to be in Gryffindor. This moment foreshadows when Neville will be brave enough to stand up to Malfoy in the next chapter, as well as Harry, Ron, and Hermione themselves near the end of the novel.



Neville thanks Harry and gives him the card from the Chocolate Frog, knowing that he collects them. It’s the Dumbledore card again, but Harry notices something: Nicolas Flamel’s name. The card says that Dumbledore worked on alchemy with Nicolas Flamel. Hermione then gets a strike of inspiration: she pulls out a large book that she had checked out a few weeks earlier and reads that Flamel “is the only known maker of [the Sorcerer’s Stone](#).”

Here, friendship allows Harry, Ron, and Hermione together to discover who Nicolas Flamel is. Harry’s support for Neville leads him to a key clue about Flamel, which in turn leads Hermione to her own discovery. Thus, only together, through their friendship, is the trio able to continue unraveling the mystery behind what the dog is guarding.



Ron and Harry don't know what [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) is. Hermione explains that it transforms any metal into gold, and that it also produces the Elixir of Life, which makes the drinker immortal. The Stone currently belongs to Nicolas Flamel, who is 665 years old. They realize that this is what Fluffy must be guarding, and what Snape is trying to steal.

The revelations about what the Sorcerer's Stone is immediately associate the Stone with power and greed, as it gives the person who has it the ability to defy death (perhaps the ultimate form of power) and gain infinite wealth. Thus, it becomes an immediate attraction to anyone who wants power and greed.



The day of the Quidditch match, Harry feels incredibly anxious. Hermione and Ron have secretly been practicing the Leg-Locker Curse to use on Snape if necessary. To add to the pressure, Wood tells Harry that they need him to catch the Snitch early on in the game—before Snape can favor Hufflepuff too much. Fred notes that the whole school is in the stands, including Dumbledore. This makes Harry feel relieved, as he knows that Snape wouldn't try to hurt him with Dumbledore there.

It is notable that even when Harry believed that Snape might have tried to kill him at the last game, he still wants to play in this match because without him, his team would have to forfeit. The love of both Ron and Hermione as well as Dumbledore eases Harry's mind, because he knows that they are there to protect him.



The game begins. Snape awards Hufflepuff early penalties for no reason as Harry looks for the Snitch "like a hawk." Up in the stands, Malfoy makes fun of Harry, and then of Ron and Neville, who are sitting nearby. Neville stands up, and stutters that he's "worth twelve of [Malfoy.]" Malfoy continues to taunt him, remarking on his lack of intelligence and Ron's lack of money. Ron starts to wrestle with Malfoy.

Neville again benefits from the friendship that Harry, Ron, and Hermione have shown him. Their words earlier in the chapter allow Neville to stand up to Malfoy and discover his own form of courage, which also in turn helps him feel that he belongs with the Gryffindors.



Harry then makes a "spectacular dive," after which he raises the Snitch in triumph. The stands erupt: no one can remember the Snitch being caught so quickly. Dumbledore congratulates Harry, saying it's nice to see that he's "keeping busy." The Gryffindors lift Harry onto their shoulders victoriously, cheering his success. When Harry leaves the locker room alone some time later, he's happier than he's ever been. He has done something he can really be proud of, and is not just a famous name anymore.

Dumbledore's remark that he's glad Harry has been "keeping busy" is a reference to the Mirror of Erised. Instead, Harry has been pursuing a different, more tangible desire: the desire to prove himself through hard work and to feel that he belongs among the people he loves. It is notable that his success in Quidditch does not fuel any kind of ego; rather, it relieves him because he feels like he has finally done something to justify the fame that has already been afforded to him.



As Harry returns his broom to the broom shed, he notices a hooded figure walking toward the forbidden forest—Snape, sneaking around during dinner. Harry takes off on his broom and follows, climbing into a tree to watch. Snape is there, and so is Quirrell. Snape asks, threateningly, if Quirrell has found out how to get past Hagrid's dog and get to [the Sorcerer's Stone](#) yet. Snape concludes their conversation by saying that they will have another chat soon, when Quirrell has had time to "decide where [his] loyalties lie."

Now that Harry has discovered what Fluffy is guarding, he feels even more emboldened to break the rules, knowing that it would be wrong to let someone he believes to be bad (even if that person is a teacher) get their hands on the Stone. Because of the Stone's association with power, and because of power's association with evil, Harry understands the importance of keeping it safe.



Harry returns to the castle, and Ron and Hermione meet him, asking where he's been. They tell him everyone is waiting in the common room to have a party for him. Harry breathlessly tells them that Snape's trying to steal [the Stone](#), and trying to force Quirrell to help him get to it. They worry that the feeble, stuttering Professor Quirrell is the only thing standing between Snape and the Stone.

Again, Harry shows his humility and self-sacrificing nature. Instead of resting on his laurels and enjoying the party that has been set for him, he worries instead about the future danger that could be headed their way if Snape gets his hands on the Sorcerer's Stone, and how they can work to prevent that outcome.



CHAPTER 14: NORBERT THE NORWEGIAN RIDGEBACK

Every time Harry, Ron, and Hermione pass the third-floor corridor, they check that Fluffy is still there. But Hermione also starts to be preoccupied with the exams that are looming at the end of the year, and the teachers start to pile on more and more homework. One day in the library, Ron notices Hagrid, but when he greets him, Hagrid becomes very shifty and leaves with a book behind his back. They discover that Hagrid is looking up books about dragons, though Ron comments that keeping a dragon as a pet is illegal.

While Harry and Ron have grappled with their own dangerous desires, Hagrid's deepest desire becomes dangerous as well—both in the sense of what it is, an illegal fire-breathing dragon, and how he acquired it, as it is ultimately revealed that he only gained it in exchange for a piece of key information about how to tame Fluffy.



Harry, Ron, and Hermione decide to go down to Hagrid's hut. They start to ask Hagrid more about the other enchantments guarding [the Stone](#), revealing that they know what Fluffy is hiding. Hagrid doesn't tell them, but he does tell them who is helping protect the Stone, including Dumbledore, Quirrell, and Snape. The students think to themselves that if Snape is helping to protect the Stone, he could easily find out how the other teachers had guarded it.

Knowing that Snape likely knows how to get to the Stone is ultimately what prompts Harry and the rest of the gang to try and steal it first. They know that they would be breaking many rules to do so, but their impulse to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community as a whole proves even stronger.



Hagrid assures Harry that he hasn't told anyone how to get past Fluffy. Harry is relieved, until he sees something on the fire: an enormous black dragon egg, which Hagrid reveals he won the previous night in a game of cards with a stranger. Now, they think, they have to worry about what might happen if Hagrid is discovered with an illegal dragon.

Hagrid's desire led him to acquire an illegal dragon, but instead of any impulse to try to follow the rules, Harry, Ron, and Hermione's main concern is instead with protecting Hagrid and making sure that he doesn't get into trouble.



A few days later the dragon hatches, but when Harry, Ron, and Hermione sneak down to see it happen, Malfoy also ends up following them and seeing the dragon as well. They grow very nervous about Malfoy and try to convince Hagrid to set the dragon free. Hagrid refuses, saying that Norbert (his name for the dragon) is too young to survive on his own. Harry suggests that they send Norbert to Ron's brother Charlie, who can take care of him and then set him free. Hagrid agrees, and they send an owl to Charlie.

Harry's decision again prioritizes doing what's right rather than strictly following the rules. He doesn't want to turn Hagrid in and he doesn't want to condemn this dragon to die, but he also knows that they all could get into serious trouble because of what Malfoy has seen.



The following week drags on. Harry, Ron, and Hermione help take care of Norbert (even though he bites Ron's hand). Then Hedwig returns with a letter from Charlie. Charlie suggests that they send Norbert with friends of his who are visiting him the following week. He writes that they should bring Norbert to the tallest tower at midnight on Saturday, so his friends can take the dragon away under the cover of night.

By the next morning, Ron's hand has swollen to twice its size, forcing him to go to the hospital wing. When Harry and Hermione visit him, Ron reveals that Malfoy had come to his bed to make fun of him under the guise of borrowing one of Ron's books. But Ron then realizes that Charlie's letter was in the book Malfoy took, so now Malfoy knows about the plan. Still, Harry and Hermione think that they can't change the plan.

On Saturday, Hagrid says goodbye to Norbert and Harry and Hermione carry him up to the castle under the [Invisibility Cloak](#). In the hall, they see Professor McGonagall giving Malfoy detention and taking twenty points from Slytherin as he tries to protest that Harry is going to be coming with a dragon.

Harry and Hermione make it to the top of the tower, where Charlie's friends take Norbert from them. They are elated that their plan goes so well, and that Malfoy got detention in the process. But as they slip back down the stairs, Filch emerges from the darkness, and Harry and Hermione realize that they have left the [Cloak](#) at the top of the tower.

CHAPTER 15: THE FORBIDDEN FOREST

Filch takes Harry and Hermione to Professor McGonagall's study. When they reach her, Neville is also there—he had been trying to warn Harry that Malfoy was going to catch him. McGonagall deduces that they fed Malfoy the story to try to get him out of bed and into trouble. She gives the three of them detention and takes fifty points from Gryffindor for each of them, putting Gryffindor in last place for the House Cup. The next day, the other Gryffindors are furious with Harry. Harry is almost glad the exams aren't far away; he buries himself in his studies and vows not to meddle anymore.

About a week before exams, Harry hears Quirrell whimpering in a classroom as he walks down the hall. He thinks that someone is threatening Quirrell, and hears him sob, "No—not again, please—". Quirrell emerges from the room quickly, but when Harry peers into the classroom, it is empty, but a door is ajar at the other end. Harry reminds himself not to meddle.

Getting rid of Norbert now explicitly requires that Harry, Ron, and Hermione break the school's rules, sneaking out of bed at night. But again, they do so in the hope that Hagrid can stay out of trouble and that the dragon will be in good hands.



Hagrid's desire to keep a dragon becomes particularly dangerous when it not only threatens Ron's health, but also threatens to get Harry, Ron, and Hermione into serious trouble as they try to help Hagrid stay out of trouble.



The Invisibility Cloak once again becomes an instrument that helps Harry and his friends break the rules in a useful way, as it allows them to protect Hagrid from legal ramifications.



This is one of the rare times that Harry is punished for his rule-breaking, though it is worth noting that this punishment would have been avoided if he had retained his Invisibility Cloak.



This is one of the rare times that Harry gets in trouble for breaking the rules, and he takes it as a sign not to get involved with things that can get him into trouble. Yet he was, in fact, breaking the rules for a good reason, and when he returns to breaking the rules at the end of the story, it is because he acknowledges once more that sometimes it is important to meddle in things in order to do what is right.



Harry is adamant that Snape is evilly torturing the feeble, nervous Professor Quirrell so that Snape can get the Stone for himself.



Harry tells Hermione and Ron what he heard, wondering if Snape convinced Quirrell to tell him how to get past his enchantment. Hermione says that they should go to Dumbledore, but Harry argues that they have no proof, and that Dumbledore will think that they made it all up to get Snape fired. Also, they're not supposed to know about [the Stone](#) in the first place. Harry resolves not to do anything.

The following evening, Filch takes Harry, Hermione, Neville, and Malfoy to Hagrid's hut, announcing that they will be serving detention in the Forbidden Forest. Both Malfoy and Neville grow visibly nervous, but Harry is just glad to see Hagrid. As the students and Hagrid (and Hagrid's bloodhound, Fang) walk through the Forest, Hagrid points to a silvery liquid on the ground, which he explains is unicorn blood. They're going to split into two parties to try and find the animal. Harry, Hermione, and Hagrid take one path, while Malfoy, Neville, and Fang take another.

Harry, Hagrid, and Hermione follow a trail of blood until they hear something along the path. Hagrid arms his bow in alarm, but a centaur named Ronan emerges into the clearing. Hagrid greets Ronan, who remarks that Mars is bright. Hagrid asks if he's seen something bad in the forest, as there's a hurt unicorn somewhere. Ronan remarks vaguely that "the innocent are [always] the first victims." Another centaur, Bane, joins them, and answers Hagrid's questions just as vaguely. Hagrid walks off with Harry and Hermione in a huff. He explains that centaurs have "deep minds," but don't reveal much about what they know to humans.

Hagrid, Harry, and Hermione see red sparks—a signal that Neville and Malfoy are in trouble. Hagrid leaves Harry and Hermione on the path while he goes for the others. They grow more and more nervous until Hagrid returns with the other boys. Malfoy had pranked Neville, causing him to panic and send up sparks. Hagrid switches the groups, pairing Harry and Malfoy and taking Neville and Hermione with him.

Harry and Malfoy walk together with Fang for nearly half an hour, and Harry notes that the blood on the ground is getting thicker. They then see the unicorn, dead on the ground. As Harry approaches it, a hooded figure (later revealed as Voldemort) crawls across the ground and begins to drink the unicorn's blood. Malfoy and Fang bolt away, but Harry is paralyzed in fear. The figure starts to come toward Harry, and Harry feels an exceptional pain in his scar. Harry staggers back, and just before the figure reaches him, another centaur charges toward it, sending the figure running. The centaur, Firenze, offers to take Harry to Hagrid on his back.

Harry's argument is a decent one, but it is also worth noting that Dumbledore seems to continue to encourage Harry to break the rules when he feels it is necessary, rather than come to Dumbledore to deal with the problems they are facing.



Harry's relief in knowing that Hagrid is the one leading them into the forest (in contrast to someone like Filch) once again emphasizes how the bonds of friendship feel like a form of protection to Harry. Additionally, the unicorn blood, which Harry will come to learn has lifesaving properties, becomes a representation of how greedy people prioritize themselves over anyone and anything else, even the most innocent of creatures.



Ronan's statement contains a great deal of foreshadowing. The reference to Mars is a reference to Greek mythology, as Mars is the god of war, and war is imminent in the wizarding world because of Voldemort's return. Additionally, his statement about the innocence foreshadows not only the death of the unicorn, but also relates to Harry and his tendency to be self-sacrificial.



In contrast with Harry's comfort and protection with Hagrid, Malfoy continues to antagonize the other students. This lack of friendship and outright cruelty makes Neville feel extremely vulnerable.



This is the first time that Harry (and the reader) encounters Voldemort. Even though Voldemort has not fully returned to power, the image of this hooded figure drinking the blood of a unicorn demonstrates the greediness of the series' central villain. Thus, just as Harry's association with humility makes him a quintessentially "good" character, Voldemort's association with greed and power makes him a quintessentially evil one.



Firenze and Harry gallop back, but are interrupted by Bane and Ronan, who criticize Firenze for behaving like a “common mule” with Harry on his back. Firenze says that this is not just anyone—it’s “the Potter boy.” Ronan and Bane warn him not to tell Harry what they have read in the “movements of the planets.” Firenze angrily tells them that he opposes the thing that is lurking in the forest, and will take the side of humans if he needs.

Firenze runs off with Harry, ignoring Harry’s questions about what is lurking in the forest and why the others are angry. Firenze instead tells Harry that unicorn blood can keep someone on the brink of death alive, “but at a terrible price,” because they “have slain something pure and defenseless.” A person who drinks unicorn blood will live a “cursed life, from the moment the blood touches [their] lips.” When Harry asks who would do that, Firenze asks who has long awaited their chance to return to power—and who might want to keep themselves alive in order to drink from the Elixir of Life. Harry realizes that Firenze means Voldemort.

At that moment, Hagrid and Hermione run towards Harry and Firenze on the path, happy to that he’s okay. Back in the Gryffindor common room, Harry tells both Ron and Hermione what he saw, concluding that Snape is trying to steal [the Stone](#) for Voldemort so that Voldemort can then kill Harry. Hermione tries to comfort him, saying that Voldemort wouldn’t try to kill Harry with Dumbledore around. Harry goes to bed exhausted, but when he pulls back his sheets, he finds the [Invisibility Cloak](#) waiting for him. The note pinned to it says, “Just in case.”

The centaurs are referencing a prophesy that will become central to the series in the later books and play on themes of fate and choice. But Firenze’s assertion that he opposes Voldemort makes an important point about power: that if people do not resist someone gaining power for the wrong reasons, it only enables that power.



Here Rowling cements her association with greed, power, and evil. A person who is greedy and wants to become so powerful as to evade death can only by necessity be evil, because to do so requires them to kill something “pure and defenseless.” Harry also realizes how powerful that makes the Elixir of Life as well, and how it can be corrupted into an evil substance because it can enable Voldemort’s return.



Harry, again fueled by his desire to prove that Snape is acting out of evil, tries to reason that he wants the Stone for Voldemort, prompted by the sneaking around that he has seen Snape do, but also because of Harry’s initial impression of Snape’s willingness to abuse his power. Additionally, the Cloak makes its return, seemingly sent from the same person who gifted it to Harry the first time (later revealed as Dumbledore). The note, which reads, “Just in case,” reminds Harry that sometimes it is necessary to break the rules.



CHAPTER 16: THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR

As Harry completes his exams, he constantly worries that Voldemort is going to get [the Stone](#). He is plagued by nightmares, and a little frustrated that Ron and Hermione don’t seem as worried about the Stone. They try to comfort him again, saying Snape won’t go after the Stone with Dumbledore there, and they still have no proof that he can get past Fluffy.

A sudden thought strikes Harry: it’s odd that Hagrid desperately wants a dragon, and a stranger just happens to show up in town with an egg. Harry, Ron, and Hermione visit Hagrid, who reveals that the stranger’s face had been hidden by a cloak, and that he had told the stranger (after a few drinks) that the key to taking care of a beast is knowing how to soothe it: for example, he told the stranger, with Fluffy all a person has to do is play music, and he’ll fall asleep.

Harry’s inherent selflessness becomes more and more evident over the course of this chapter. Harry is unlike any other eleven-year-old in that he wants to make sure that the people around him are safe, and will personally put himself in harm’s way in order to ensure this.



Hagrid’s desire for a dragon serves as another, if more minor, example, of how desires can be dangerous. Hagrid’s intense longing for a dragon becomes a weakness that Voldemort is able to exploit, which can allow him to get past Fluffy.



After hearing this information, Harry, Ron, and Hermione bolt inside, figuring that Snape or Voldemort must have been the hooded stranger. When they see Professor McGonagall, they ask to see Professor Dumbledore. McGonagall reveals that he left ten minutes prior to fly to the Ministry of Magic on urgent business. Harry is frantic, revealing that they need to see him about [the Sorcerer's Stone](#), as someone is going to try to steal it. McGonagall is shocked that they know about the Stone, but assures them that it is well protected.

When McGonagall leaves, Harry figures that Snape sent the owl summoning Dumbledore, and that he's going to try to steal [the Stone](#) that night. Harry resolves to get to the Stone before Snape. Hermione and Ron warn that he'll be expelled if he's caught, but Harry is adamant. He gives an impassioned speech, saying that if Voldemort returns, "there won't be any Hogwarts to get expelled from," and that he can't let the wizard return who killed his parents.

Hermione and Ron acknowledge that Harry is right, and decide to go with him. That night, they take the [Invisibility Cloak](#) and the flute that Hagrid gave Harry for Christmas—but there's one hitch. Neville is waiting in the common room, and tries to prevent them from going so that Gryffindor doesn't get into any more trouble. Hermione apologizes profusely and then uses a spell on Neville that locks his whole body. They then leave through the portrait hole.

When Harry, Ron, and Hermione arrive at the third-floor corridor, the door is already open. Fluffy is there, and as Harry plays a tune on the flute, the dog's eyes droop. The three of them open the trap door, and Harry offers to drop down first into the darkness, falling a long way down before landing with a thump on something soft. Ron and Hermione follow suit.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione land on a snakelike plant, which starts to wind around them and constrict their breathing. Hermione remembers that it's called Devil's Snare, and that it will loosen in the presence of light or fire—but says they don't have any wood. As he and Harry start to choke, Ron reminds Hermione that she's a witch; Hermione quickly casts a spell that sets flames on the plant. It loosens its grip and they are able to pull free. They run down the corridor that leads out of the room.

Dumbledore's sudden absence in this moment is suspect. While Dumbledore is called away on urgent business (perhaps a ruse from someone to get him out of the way), Harry later surmises that Dumbledore actually wanted Harry to have the opportunity to face Voldemort on his own. In this way, Dumbledore continues to encourage Harry to break the rules when necessary, and also reinforces Harry's self-sacrificing tendencies.



Here Harry's heroism truly stands out, as he takes it upon himself to make sure that Voldemort doesn't return, even if he is putting himself in grave danger. His stated reasons for doing so also demonstrate his most important motivators: doing what is right, protecting the wizarding world and the school that have become his home, and repaying the love and sacrifice that his parents gave to him.



Hermione, Ron, and even Neville pick up on Harry's humility, and demonstrate how they, too, put others above themselves. Here, Hermione and Ron put themselves in danger in order to steal the Stone just as Harry does. Neville, for his part, stands up to his friends in order to try to protect them from their own rule-breaking, and for the good of Gryffindor house as a whole.



Another element of Harry, Ron, and Hermione's adventure is that they know they are breaking the rules (and have broken many in their quest to solve the mystery of what Fluffy is guarding), but it is all in the name of doing what they ultimately believe is the right thing to do.



As the central trio continue through these obstacles, their friendship becomes key to achieving their goal because they need each other to pass through all of the rooms. In facing Devil's Snare, Hermione's knowledge of spells (as well as Ron's logical reminder that Hermione is a witch) becomes essential in preventing them from being choked to death.



At the end of the corridor is a large, high-ceilinged chamber with hundreds of flying keys in the air and a locked wooden door on the other side. Harry spots broomsticks, and he, Ron, and Hermione each mount one, realizing that they have to find the correct key. Harry quickly spots a large silver one with a bent wing, as if it had already been caught and stuffed in the keyhole. Together, Harry, Ron, and Hermione close in on the key and Harry is able to catch it.

In the next chamber, Harry, Ron, and Hermione find a huge, life-sized wizard's chess set, and Ron concludes that they have to play their way across the room. Harry takes the place of a bishop; Hermione, a castle; and Ron, a knight. Ron directs the pieces, shuddering when he sees their pieces being violently destroyed when they are taken. Eventually, Ron realizes that he must allow himself to be taken in order to win. Harry and Hermione protest, but Ron argues that they have to "make some sacrifices" to get to [the Stone](#). He moves and the white queen pounces on him, striking him hard across the head. Harry then checkmates the king.

Harry and Hermione continue on, though they're shaken by what happened to Ron. In the next room, they find that a troll has already been dealt with, so they press on. When they step into the next room, a fire springs up both in front of them and behind them. They see a table with seven potions and a logic puzzle. Only one potion will allow them to go forward; one will allow them to go back; three will kill them; and two will do nothing. Hermione quickly figures out the puzzle, discerning which potion is which.

Harry says that he will go forward, and Hermione should take the one that will allow her to go back, so that she can take care of Ron and then send an owl to Dumbledore. Worried that Voldemort will be waiting for Harry, Hermione throws her arms around her friend and says that he is an excellent wizard. When he protests that she is better than him, she tells him that bravery and friendship are far more important than being just clever. They each take a potion, and Hermione walks back while Harry continues forward.

Just as Hermione's knowledge was crucial to passing the Devil's Snare, here Harry's Quidditch skills become central to catching the key. But even though Harry takes the lead, it does require all three of them to accomplish the task, once again highlighting the value of friendship in facing challenges.



While Hermione took the lead on the Devil's Snare and Harry took the lead with the keys, in this challenge Ron uses his chess skills to advance the trio (though again, only with the help of all three of them together, as they all must stand in as chess figures). Ron also demonstrates his humility by understanding that he will have to sacrifice himself, allowing the white queen to strike him, hard, in order to let Harry and Hermione continue on. This is particularly significant given that Ron feels overshadowed by his siblings and longs for his own success and fame; in letting Harry and Hermione go on without him, Ron humbly lets go of his own desires in this moment.



Again, Hermione's knowledge allows the two of them to get closer and closer to Voldemort. The puzzle also seems particularly suited to Hermione: the person passing this challenge must be able to solve regular logic as well as have magical knowledge. And so, Hermione's Muggle upbringing, which perhaps made her feel like an outsider just as it did for Harry, actually becomes an advantage here.



Hermione and Ron get Harry as far as they can, and their friendship is vital to getting Harry to the Sorcerer's Stone—which Hermione notes in her final words to him. While Harry humbly suggests that Hermione is a better witch, ultimately he understands that he is the one who must face Voldemort, wishing to put himself in harm's way rather than putting anyone else there.



CHAPTER 17: THE MAN WITH TWO FACES

In the final room, Harry is surprised to come face to face not with Snape or Voldemort, but with Quirrell. Quirrell, who is no longer stuttering and nervous, explains chillingly that he was the one who tried to jinx Harry's broom (though Hermione knocked him over, messing up his curse), and that Snape was trying to save Harry with a countercurse. Quirrell says, however, that Snape can't prevent him from killing Harry now. He snaps his fingers, and ropes wrap tightly around Harry. Quirrell continues calmly, saying that he let the troll in on Halloween, while Snape went to the third floor to try to head him off.

Harry then realizes that [the Mirror of Erised](#) is behind Quirrell. Quirrell examines it, knowing that it must be the key to finding [the Stone](#). In the Mirror's reflection, he sees himself proudly presenting the Stone to Voldemort, but doesn't know where the Stone is. Harry tries to distract him, asking about the time he heard Quirrell sobbing. Quirrell says that sometimes he is too weak to follow his master's orders. His master has taught him that "there is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to see it."

Harry realizes that his deepest desire at that moment is to find [the Stone](#) before Quirrell. Thus, if he looks in [the Mirror of Erised](#), he should see himself finding it. Meanwhile, Quirrell is also trying to figure out how to use the Mirror. He asks for help from Voldemort, and to Harry's surprise, a voice whispers, "Use the boy."

Quirrell unbinds Harry and tells him to stand in front of [the Mirror](#). When Harry sees his reflection, it smiles at him and pulls the blood-red [Stone](#) out of his pocket. When his reflection puts the Stone back, Harry can feel the real Stone drop into his pocket. But when Quirrell asks Harry what he sees, Harry hastily lies and says that he sees himself winning the House Cup for Gryffindor.

Voldemort's voice returns, demanding to see Harry face to face. Quirrell reaches up and undoes his purple turban, then turns around. At the back of his head is Voldemort's face, with "glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils." Voldemort tells Harry that he has been reduced to a weak form that can only survive by sharing another's body. Unicorn blood has strengthened him, but the Elixir of Life will allow him to create a body of his own. He demands that Harry hand over [the Stone](#).

Harry makes it to the Stone and doesn't hesitate to put himself in danger, knowing that he is likely facing Snape or Voldemort, and that there is a great possibility of his being killed. But his surprise at seeing Quirrell demonstrates how his desire to prove that Snape was after the Stone had blinded him to the reality.



The philosophy that Quirrell and Voldemort espouse is the most direct argument that Rowling makes associating power and greed with evil. Even though Quirrell says that there is no such thing as evil, the fact that he is possessed by a wizard who kills anyone who stands in his way, and the fact that Harry does not believe this philosophy, demonstrates that Rowling too does not truly espouse this belief.



Even though desires can be dangerous, Rowling uses Harry's train of thought to show that desires, when they are motivated by selflessness or the greater good, can actually be useful. This is ultimately why Harry can find the Stone and Quirrell cannot.



Harry's humility and self-sacrifice, in that he doesn't want the Stone for himself but only to prevent Quirrell from getting it, is direct in contrast with Quirrell and Voldemort's desire and greed, as their sole interest is securing more power for themselves. The former is thus associated with goodness, while the latter are associated with evil.



Voldemort's evilness is evident not only in his appearance, but in the fact that he has taken over the body of another person (and drank the blood of something pure) in order to sustain his own life. This makes his greed parasitic, and is the opposite of Harry's tendency to put others' well-being over his own.



Harry starts to move away. Voldemort tells Harry not to be a fool, or he will meet the same end as Lily and James, who died trying to save Harry from Voldemort. He warns Harry not to let their deaths be in vain, commanding him again to hand over [the Stone](#). Harry runs, screaming, “NEVER!” but Quirrell grabs him. But when he does so, pain shoots through Harry’s scar and Quirrell lets go of him instantly, the skin on his hands burning.

Quirrell tries to grab Harry again, but his hands continue to blister, and he howls in agony. Voldemort tells Quirrell to kill Harry, but before Quirrell can pull out his wand, Harry realizes that he must keep Quirrell in enough pain to stop him from performing a curse. He grabs Quirrell by the arm and holds tight, until Harry faints from the pain in his scar.

Harry awakens in the hospital wing, with Dumbledore in front of him. Dumbledore explains calmly that Harry’s been out cold for three days, and that Quirrell does not have [the Stone](#). Dumbledore had arrived just in time to rescue Harry, after realizing that the message from the Ministry was a ruse. He tells Harry that the Stone is going to be destroyed, because people cannot handle the possibility of gaining eternal life and infinite wealth.

Harry continues, wondering what happened to Voldemort. Dumbledore says that Quirrell has died, but Harry merely delayed Voldemort’s return to power. Harry then asks why Quirrell couldn’t touch him; Dumbledore explains that the kind of love and sacrifice that Lily made in dying for Harry gives a person some protection forever. Quirrell, who is “full of hatred, greed, and ambition,” could not understand this love and “could not touch [Harry] for this reason.”

Harry then asks who left the [Invisibility Cloak](#) for him; Dumbledore reveals that it was him, and that he thought it would be useful. Harry’s asks a final question: how he got [the Stone](#) out of [the Mirror](#). Dumbledore explains that only someone who wanted to locate the Stone, but not actually put it to use, would be able to get it. If someone wanted to use the Stone, “they’d just see themselves making gold or drinking Elixir of Life.”

Harry’s self-sacrifice is perhaps an extension of the self-sacrifice that Lily and James displayed when trying to protect their son. Thus, Harry understands that his own death would not be in vain, but that he would die in order to prevent the return of an evil wizard and the destruction of everything and everyone he loves.



As Dumbledore explains later in the chapter, the sacrifice that Lily made for Harry provides him with a kind of magical shield that makes it impossible for Quirrell to touch him. Thus, love becomes a literal form of protection.



The defeat of Voldemort parallels the destruction of the Stone. Both represent distillations of greed, and the vanquishing of both of them at the end of the novel reinforces the fact that humility, self-sacrifice and good will overcome power, greed, and evil.



The explanation for why Quirrell couldn’t touch Harry emphasizes the true power of family and love as a form of protection. Lily’s sacrifice protected Harry not only in his first confrontation with Voldemort, but throughout his entire life—a protection that even outlives her.



The fact that Dumbledore is the one who gave Harry the Invisibility Cloak proves that he encouraged (or at least allowed) Harry to break the rules all year. Dumbledore’s explanation of how Harry acquired the Stone also emphasizes how only a person who wanted the Stone not for their own power or greed, but rather to protect it from falling into the wrong hands, could acquire it.



After Dumbledore leaves, Ron and Hermione visit Harry, relieved to see that he's okay. Harry explains what happened to him before asking what happened to them. Hermione explains that they were able to get back, and as soon as they dashed to the owlery they saw Dumbledore in the entrance hall, who somehow knew that Harry had gone after [the Stone](#). Harry realizes that Dumbledore wanted to give Harry a chance, teaching him just enough to help them (the [Invisibility Cloak](#), the information about [the Mirror](#)) rather than stopping them.

Dumbledore's assumption that Harry had gone after the Stone demonstrates his faith that Harry would make humble and self-sacrificing choices, and as Harry realizes, his behind-the-scenes guidance had subtly led Harry to the Stone. This ultimately allowed Harry to prevail over Voldemort, and Dumbledore's guidance becomes key to Harry's character arc throughout the rest of the books as well.



The next day, Harry gets one more visitor: Hagrid, who bursts into tears when he sees Harry and apologizes, saying that it's all his fault for telling Quirrell how to get past Fluffy. Harry comforts him, saying that Voldemort would have found a way anyway. Hagrid feels better, and says that he has a present for Harry: a leather-bound book of wizard photographs, all of which are of Lily and James. Hagrid had asked all of their school friends for photos, knowing that Harry didn't have any. Harry is speechless with gratitude.

This exchange between Harry and Hagrid is a testament to the power of friendship and love. In some ways, their dynamic has reversed, as Harry now comforts Hagrid. But at the same time, Hagrid, as he has been from the beginning of the book, serves as a conduit for the familial love that Harry did not get growing up. Hagrid gives him the gift of seeing his parents, which had been his innermost desire, but the gesture in and of itself is a powerful form of love.



At the end-of-year feast, the Great Hall is decked out in Slytherin's colors, silver and green, as Slytherin has the most points in the House Cup. Dumbledore arrives and begins a speech, saying that he has a few last-minute points to award before the House Cup is awarded. Dumbledore awards fifty points to Ron for the "best-played game of chess Hogwarts has seen in many years," and fifty points to Hermione "for the cool use of logic in the face of fire."

The points that Dumbledore awards at the feast serves as a final confirmation of the joint achievement of Harry, Ron, and Hermione in successfully battling their way to the Stone, and affirming the idea that sometimes it's necessary to break the rules in order to do what is right.



Dumbledore awards Harry sixty points for "pure nerve and outstanding courage." Gryffindor students give a roaring cheer: they are now tied with Slytherin for the House Cup. Lastly, Dumbledore awards ten points to Neville for being brave enough to stand up to his friends. With this, Gryffindor wins the House Cup, and Dumbledore claps his hands to change the silver and green decorations to Gryffindor's scarlet and gold. The students enjoy the feast, and Harry thinks it is the best evening of his life.

It is notable that Dumbledore awards points to both Harry and Neville. It is not simply that he rewards rule-breaking, but instead that he rewards students for doing what they believe in their heart is the right thing to do.



Harry packs up his belongings with a bittersweet sense of finality. He and the other students board the Hogwarts Express and a few hours later arrive at King's Cross station. Lots of students say goodbye to Harry, and Ron makes Harry and Hermione promise to visit him over the summer. Vernon arrives to take Harry home. Ron and Hermione say goodbye, telling Harry to have a good holiday. Harry responds that he will, saying with a smile that the Dursleys don't know that he's not allowed to do magic at home.

The final passages of the book emphasize the transformation that Harry's life has undergone. In discovering magic, he has also discovered perhaps the most important things in life: a place where he belongs, and the vital bonds of friendship. These things give Harry the confidence to return to his life with the Dursleys, knowing that now, he is no longer alone, and no longer unloved.



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